

SERMON ON THE MOUNT: TEENAGERS AND YOUNG
ADULTS DISCERNING GOD'S CALL
INTO VOCATIONAL MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

SERMON ON THE MOUNT: TEENAGERS AND YOUNG ADULTS DISCERNING GOD'S CALL INTO VOCATIONAL MINISTRY

by

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United Theological Seminary, 2014

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This ministry project focuses on the absence of a ministry training program for youth discerning God's call into vocational ministry, which hinders the church's ability to fulfill the continuum of Jesus' church commissioned in Matthew 28:19-20. New Faith Baptist Church International (New Faith) in Matteson, Illinois facilitated the project. Through mixed instruction, youth completed a five-week program that explored the theology of God's call, spiritual gifts, and identified Biblical youth and contemporary youth called by God. The results of the ministry project suggest that a youth vocational ministry program will enhance the continuum of Jesus' church for future generations.

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My editors, Karen Murray and Evan Boyd: Thank you for your contribution to the completion of this ministry project.

DEDICATION

This ministry project is dedicated teenagers and young adults all over the world who are discerning God's call into vocational ministry.

In memory of:

Steven Brandon Robinson – my compassionate son

Joseph Lee Jones, Sr. – my loving father

Joseph Lee Jones, Jr. – my precious brother

Emma Waiters – my God fearing maternal granny

Miss Catherine – my first village

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KJV	King James Version
FTE	Foundation for Theological Education
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NIV	New International Version
SOM	Sermon on the Mount
CYSGT	Cokesbury Youth Spiritual Gifts Test
HYPE	Helping Young People Excel
JAM	Jesus and Me
NYC	New Faith Youth Community
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

Every generation is charged with the responsibility of carrying forth the Lord's work. The times have changed, but the Christ has not.

—— Dr. Charles E. Booth, *The Prophetic Voice: Words for Today*

INTRODUCTION

This ministry project focuses on the remediation of a void within the church that would allow teenagers and young adults to exercise their call into vocational ministry that fulfills Jesus Christ's command to go into world to "teach them to observe all the things have commanded you."¹ This Biblical call to action ensures the continuum of Christ's church throughout the earth for all peoples utilizing every generation for fulfilling the commission. God calls and the Holy Spirit equips youth with spiritual gifts for service with the same authority as adults for sustaining the church until Jesus returns for His Bride.

The love message of John 3:16 reports that God's plan of salvation go forth inclusively to everyone born in the world ensuring the never ceasing growth of God's kingdom. Chronological age and societal ideologies regarding maturation do not deter the Creator who dwells in *kairos* time from calling individuals of various ages to serve as messengers for delivering the gospel as commissioned by Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19-20. God dwelling in *kairos*, plans for humanity supersedes any concerns church leaders or congregants express regarding the maturity and capabilities of youth called into vocational ministry. The church supports God's paradigm of calling teenagers and young adults when it pulls out what God has poured into them for increasing the kingdom.

¹ Matthew 28:20.

Wycliffe defines the Greek word “*kairos*” as a created sphere in which God’s redemptive plan is actualized.”¹ In this realm of time, the Creator orchestrates, synthesizes, and unifies all aspects of creation used in the plan of redemption that exemplifies the omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience of the Sovereign authority in the redemption of humanity. Humankind dwelling in the Greek definition of *chronos*, “measures the duration of moments... “age,” or “era” which manifest purpose or fulfillment to a greater or a lesser degree,”² cannot comprehend the perplexities of God’s *kairos* leading them to fail to recognize that the exclusion of teenagers and young adults from vocational ministry development affects the missionary call of the church. This phenomenon effectively impedes youths’ and the church’s obedience to the only God possessing the authority to call, anoint and appoint individuals to reach their unsaved contemporaries while securing the church’s future.

Wayne Grudem quotes 2 Peter 3:8, *But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with Lord a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*” and adds, “*God sees all time equally and vividly.*”³ The call of teenagers and young adults represents the Creator’s divine authority in assuring that the plan of salvation continuously manifests within earth’s *chronos* that dwells within God’s *kairos* from one generation to another. God’s *kairos* supersedes the *chronos* measured by days, years and

¹ *Wycliffe Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Carl F. Henry (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 523.

² Stephen D. Renn, ed. *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Peabody, MA: Henderson Publications, 2005), 975.

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 170.

months used by people to measure human physical growth, development, mental and social development. Isaiah scripts God's word stating, *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways...so are my ways higher ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*⁴

Time in the Old and New Testaments reveals God's purpose for *chronos* and *kairos*, as agents in the plan of salvation for humanity. God commands Moses to speak to his brother, Aaron who was a priest, to observe yearly the *day of atonement* on *the tenth day of the seventh month* (Lev 16:29) by casting lots on two goats, one for God and the other lot for the scapegoat that would carry the sins of the Israelites into the wilderness.

God's goat is slain and its blood is sprinkled on the tabernacle alter seven times for the atonement for the uncleanness and transgressions of the Israelites during the year.⁵ Thus, the compassionate God designates specific *chronos* within *kairos* time to forgive the Israelites for their disobedience, transgressions and sins that the scapegoat carries away from them. Our compassionate Lord offers to pardon their sins by giving the chosen nation countless chances to honor, love and obey their mission call.

Exemplifying God's authority when actualizing in *chronos* within *kairos* and the plan of salvation for humanity, Jesus tells His disciples of His second coming, *But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels, which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*⁶ John 12:23 explicitly testifies to Jesus' compassionate love

⁴ Isa. 55:8-9.

⁵ Lev. 16.

⁶ Mark 13:32.

and humanity, stating, He informs them in that *the hour is come for the Son of man should be glorified*. Jesus, born in human form of a young virgin fulfils God's plan to redeem humanity back to its rightful place with the Creator.

God calls young individuals to disseminate the message of salvation until Jesus Christ returns for His Bride. The church cannot effectively fulfill its mission call if its predominant focus is *chronos*, which often prohibits the proper preparation of youth for vocational ministry and is out of compliance with Jesus' *kairos* call to increase the kingdom.

This ministry project materialized out of the writer's spiritual experiences and observations at New Faith Baptist Church International, (New Faith) in Matteson, Illinois, where she serves in the ministerial fellowship. Throughout the researcher's years of service in various ministries at New Faith, the writer discerned God's call to several teenagers and young adult within the church. Some openly voiced their struggle discerning and walking in their call with family members, the writers, and other members of the church.

An issue for teenagers and young adults is the conflicting decision of choosing a lucrative secular career over a life of professional minister and someone who is highly paid. The development of a vocational ministry program for teenagers and young adults at New Faith would enhance the myriad of ministries available within the church to youth. It would provide a continuum of ministry support for those who are matriculating into a higher call of service from God for the kingdom. In the past, some who discerned their call decided to secure their financial stability, establish their social status, and wait until they are older and enjoyed life, before answering God's call into vocational

ministry. Youth may experience societal and family pressures associated with career choices perpetuating the matter as some fear losing their support systems in the period of adolescence, which in itself is a difficult process to maneuver through in life.

The desire to please their support system and experience the acceptance of their peers during the developmental stages of adolescence causes anguish for those discerning a call to ministry. Teenagers and young adults need the guidance of church leaders to understand what God is speaking to their spirit in spite of the inequities imposed on the community by the dominate society.

Fundamentally, God's call is a summons to serve the kingdom and it supersedes parental authority as demonstrated by David and Jeremiah. Throughout Scripture and history, God has called individuals, young and old, to aid in setting captives free from bondage. The greatest of all, Jesus Christ entered the world as an infant. He grew in stature and wisdom and became the Savior that would fulfill God's plan to deliver humanity from the penalty of sin, which is death. Otis and Frank Cary suggest in the journal *The Biblical World*, that the disciples may have been teenagers and young adults.⁷ Jesus called a team of young willing souls who were not entrenched in the Law. Jesus mentored and shared the Gospel with the disciples in order to spread it to the Jews and Gentiles around the world.

The church has the responsibility to educate all members of the body that God is Sovereign and all calls serve to God's plan for humanity. Larry L. Swain echoes what many theologians and church leaders contend, "God calls all people regardless of past

⁷ Otis and Frank Cary, "How Old Were Christ's Disciples?" *The Biblical World* 50, no. 1 (July 1917): 3-12, Accessed April 7, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3136128>.

history, limitations, or situation.”⁸ Divine calls are summons, invitations, for individuals to share their spiritual gifts within the local church and Church Universal. God’s calls are not for you after you fix all your mistakes, or when you are smarter or stronger, or when you are older.”⁹ The praxis of developing, learning, and serving in ministry reveals a process that begins with God’s initial call to the individual. Jeremiah represents God’s paradigmatic call of both old and youth to serve the kingdom of God. Peter and Paul join David, Moses, and Abraham in symbolizing those with questionable character, yet, they accomplished God’s assignments for their life of assuring the continuation of God’s Kingdom.

Through the works of the Holy Spirit the process of equipping youth for their service to God through the local church provides a spiritual support system that teaches God’s sovereign authority in calling and assisting youth in understanding their individual calls. Teenagers and young adults experiencing God’s call oftentimes struggle alone while trying to decipher what it means. These youth often fear sharing their thoughts with their support community, which consists of parents, school, extended family, and friends. They may perceive the absence of a ministry for teenagers and young adults discerning a call from God as an indication that their local church considers youth to be too immature and lack the necessary experiences for vocational ministry.

⁸ Larry L. McSwain and Kay Wilson Shurden, *Call Waiting: God’s Invitation to Youth* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2005), 18.

⁹ Ibid., 19.

It is the Church's responsibility, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to discern the call of all of its members in a safe and nurturing environment providing youth with the structure and spiritual support needed to explore their call. A ministry designed specifically to meet their needs will remediate the practice of excluding younger generations from sharing their gifts, while preparing for a life of vocational ministry.

The biblical paradigm model of calling youth, in both New and Old Testaments, under girds the standard for today's church, the willingness to reach the unsaved by all godly means available sanctioned by the Creator. Jeremiah's call entailed delivering countless messages sent by God to Judah in an effort to prevent its destruction. God wanted to save the perpetual disobedient nation in spite of their deeds that deprived other nations from knowing God. Paul instruction to Timothy, *Let not man [woman] despise your youth.* (1 Tim. 4:12),¹⁰ serves as a witness to Christ's intent for church to live in a godly manner reflective of the true biblical doctrines for increasing God's family for generations to come. Elders must model God's paradigm by continually preparing the next generation for vocational ministry for the continuum of Christ's church.

Preparing the next generation of ministers entails the amalgamation of personal, spiritual, and social growth of youth who God calls and anoints to teach and preach to the world. Equipping youth to minister to their church peers and evangelizing the

¹⁰ Unless noted otherwise Scripture quoted from the King James Version (KJV).

un-churched are a by-products of a vocational ministry. Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu states, “Seventy percent of females and 90 percent of males may be leaving the church because they feel despised.”¹¹

The absolute purpose of God’s call on youth is for the kingdom, the salvation of humanity, which situates believers back to their rightful relationship with God. Integrated in the Creator’s plan of salvation for humanity is the use of individuals with willing hearts, compassion, and faith to lead others to Jesus Christ. To neglect preparing youth called into vocational ministry has far-reaching consequences that surpass individual denial to share spiritual gifts. It affects the church’s ability to reach *all nations, and kindreds, and peoples and tongues that will stand before the throne and the Lamb*¹², which is the primary mission for ministry.

Understanding that all cultures in society consist of viable sub-cultures, which through natural occurrences communication systems are developed, the church must acknowledge the value of youth in their ability to reach their unsaved peers. Speaking the same language, which is relevant to their educational, social and spiritual context, enhances youths ability to maneuver through complex communications systems that are foreign to older generations. God equips every generation with the resources it needs to accomplish the assignment relevant its contextual situation for the common good of society.

¹¹ Kunjufu Jawanza, *What Is The Role of Teens in Your Church?* (Chicago Heights, IL: African American Images Publications, 2011), 3.

¹² Rev. 7:9.

*Iron sharpens iron, so person sharpens another.*¹³ Discerning youth are capable of sharpening the spiritual development of their peers as they acquire knowledge and understanding of God's word together from adult spiritual guides as they prepare for vocational ministry. The by-product of such extends to other youth as they choose various secular careers, which provide opportunities to minister through their given professions within the context of their work environment.

This ministry project guided teenagers and young adults in increasing their understanding of the theology of God's sovereign call for the church and the Holy Spirit's ministry of inputting spiritual gifts to all members of the body's call to assure the continuum of the church. They discovered and examined the meaning of their individual spiritual gifts, and explored their feelings about how others may view youth call into vocational ministry.

The following chapters provide an explanation of the ministry model, that support this research project, the foundations that under girds the ministry project, the methodology regarding project design and implementation, the field experience, data analysis, reflection and the conclusion.

Chapter One, Ministry Focus, identifies the specific area of ministry addressed. This chapter also provides specific information on the author and contexts that under girds the research project along with identifying the problem and the remediation. The chapter begins with the spiritual autobiography of the writer, which encapsulates the

¹³ Pro. 27:17, New International Version.

life's story and spiritual experiences. The state of the art in ministry contains the literature that under girds the research for the ministry project.

Chapter Two, Biblical Foundations, examines the Old and New Testament witnesses to God's paradigm of calling youth into vocational ministry to serve as conduits for dispensing the message salvation to humanity. The chapter emphasizes God's sovereign divine authority in calling creation and human beings to serve assuring that the message goes forth throughout the world continuously from generation to generation. Jeremiah's call, Paul's instructions to Timothy and Jesus' instructions to His disciples provide the basis for the church's charge to prepare youth for vocational ministry.

Chapter Three, Historical Foundations, contains the discussion on the training of youth for vocational ministry in various periods of the church. Reflected throughout early and contemporary church history, God's call for youth into vocational ministry has never ceased. The research study begins with the third century, which shows that the majority of the "clergy were trained haphazardly."¹⁴ Reverend Charles Jenkins's, pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church in Chicago, called at age fifteen serves as a testimony to God's paradigm of calling youth into vocational ministry in this contemporary society. The chapter concludes with an examination of the Lilly Foundation's comprehensive ministry that financially supports seminaries, divinity schools, churches, and church affiliated partnership programs that train youth for vocational ministry.

¹⁴ Glen L. Thompson, "Teaching the Teachers: Pastoral Education in the Early Church," *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File*, Accessed March 3, 2013, <http://www.wlssays.net/files/ThompsonTeaching.rtf>.

Chapter Four, Theological Foundations, focuses on ecclesiology, the study of the church and the charge to provide a safe and nurturing environment for teenagers and young adults preparing for vocational ministry. This chapter will also discuss the term “vocation” and define it for its use in God’s salvation plan for humanity.

Chapter Five, Contemporary Foundations, brings together the biblical, historical, and theological with the social sciences that aids in the cognitive understanding of God theologically when calling youth into vocational ministry. This chapter examines the societal ills and the church’s posture towards teenagers and young adults, who must minister for the kingdom.

Chapter Six, Field Experience, provides an account of the project as implemented within the context of New Faith. This includes participant input and detailed reactions, responses, and reflections. The methodology includes data collection, the effectiveness of the data collection methods that incorporates qualitative measures and the triangulation of the data. This chapter summarizes the collection of data, data analysis, and outcomes. It denotes the reflections, summary, and conclusion regarding the project. The effectiveness of the project through the implementation of the remediation process, the researcher’s analysis, and perspective is included in this chapter.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Philosophy of Christian Education

Education is one of the most significant aspects given humanity by God, which fosters intellectual, personal, social, and spiritual awareness. It enriches reflective communication and increased understanding between individuals, groups, and nations within this relational world. Education incorporates the praxis of the acquisition, understanding, and execution of obtained knowledge through self-discovery and instruction. Amalgamating the natural association between God's word and secular life, Christian education fundamentally tells the story of God's pathos and the compassionate plan of salvation for humanity manifested through the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Howard Hendricks remarks, "The miracle of ministry is that God handpicked us to be his representative to this generation"¹ The primary goal of Christian education is the equipping believers to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ salvation to the earths. It undergirds every ministry within the church body from assuring the continuum of the church for God's kingdom from generation to generation until Jesus Christ returns for His

¹ Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (New York: Multnomah Books, 1987), 19.

sheep. Through Christian education, every member of the Body of Christ may internalize God's Word in preparation for equipping other Christians and introducing nonbelievers to Christ.

Christian education reflects God's immanence and transcendence as Creator of all things in heaven and on earth as the One who calls youth into vocational ministry to assure the continuation of Jesus Christ's church from generation to generation. Stan DeKoven states, "God has given a mandate to leaders in the Body of Christ to train and educate God's precious people from birth to the grave."¹ A healthy Christian education ministry prepares all members of the body to utilize their spiritual gifts for God's service as prescribed in 1 Corinthians 12. Failing to do so minimizes the church's mission call to serve as the messenger of Christ's grace of salvation to all who accept Him as Lord and Savior.

Liberation and transformation are preeminent in Christian educational instruction used to epitomize God's will for all of humanity in both physical and spiritual realms of life. The acquisition of a clear knowledge and understanding of ones' contextual environment within society in God's plan of salvation is the underpinning mission of Christian education for all believers.

Respect for life "experiences and traditions empowers the thinking, motivation, and action of African-Americans."² A people whose identity, cultural, history and

¹ Stan E. Dekoven, *Seven Reasons Why Every Local Church Should Have A Ministry Training Center* (Ramona, CA: Vision Publishing, 1999), 51.

² Joseph V. Crockett, *Teaching Scripture From an African-American Perspective* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1991), 64.

humanity deemed subhuman by the dominant society survived the ills of both mental and physical oppression because of the biblical truths regarding the Creator's pathos for all ...*nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues...*³ Thus, Christian education must reflect biblical truth to the contextual environment.

McDowell and Hosteller suggest that youth need "mature, godly guidance."⁴ The Church's responsibility is, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to discern and prepare all called members of the Body for vocational ministry. The perpetual equipping and nurturing of youth for vocational ministry by godly experienced leaders assures the manifestation of Jesus Christ's commission scripted in Matthew 28 reaching from generation to generation.

Teenagers and young adults, as members of the body of Christ, need a safe, nurturing teaching environment. Depending on the context, various components of Christian education within the church may provide the guidance needed to prepare youth for vocational ministry. In this environment, transformation becomes a vital ingredient for spiritual growth and development while youth begins a life of service for the kingdom. Training the disciples, Jesus orchestrated the perfect model for developing vocational ministers for the church, which included the praxis of learning the gospel while developing their spiritual formation countering the Israelites' posture as God's messengers to the world.

³ Rev. 7: 9.

⁴ Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler. *Josh McDowell's Handbook on Counseling Youth: A Comprehensive Guide for Equipping Youth Workers, Pastors, and Parents* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1996), 503.

A Christian education ministry program designed specifically to meet the needs of teenagers and young adults, discerning a call into vocational ministry will remediate the church's existing paradigm, which typically excludes younger generations from ministerial training. The ministry would also serve to assist teenagers and young adults in understand that God calls all Christians to ministry regardless of their secular career choice. A product of this ministry would be the development of teenagers and young adults who are equipped to use their gifts to evangelize to their un-churched peers and minister to the church members within their generation for the continuum of the church.

Paul's instructions to God's young servant Timothy to serve as a witness to God's intent for church elders to prepare the next generation for vocational ministry, the continuation of the work of Christ's church. This entails both spiritual and social growth for youth seeking recognition of their call and the understanding of Christian doctrines in a world where the internet, radio, and television provides instantaneous resources that are contrary to biblical truths.

Technology, television, social media and the worldwide internet has ushered in an "allatonceness" [sic] society.⁵ The word "allatonceness" introduced and defined by Marshall McLuhan suggests that "Time has ceased, ""space"" has vanished ...simultaneous happening, the world has become a global." Youth in the process developing their spiritual beliefs without guidance are in danger of learning, practicing

⁵ *Mediastrategy and Christian Witness: a Special 'Reader' on Media in the Developing World*, Accessed August 22, 2014, <http://mediastrategy.files.wordpress.com/2007/06/mediaeffectsbook.pdf>.

and disseminating false doctrines in their zeal to serve in the kingdom that are in opposition of God's plan of salvation for humanity.

Technology has opened the door to a global society that introduces a plethora of religious doctrines and syncretistic systems that attempts to threaten the communication systems for transmitting biblically sound teaching from one generation to another. The *Gutenberg Galaxy* and the father of the Information Age, in 1966:

The medium, or process, for our time – electronic technology – is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life... Everything is changing – you, your family, your neighborhood, your education, your job, your government, your relation to others.⁶

McLuhan explains that time ceased, space vanished and that everyone and everywhere expanded.⁷ Simplistically stated, contemporary technology has placed the world in humanity's pockets. Technology has enhanced individuals within society with independence. The most vulnerable to the pitfalls of easily accessible information are teenagers and young adults who are seeking to make a difference in society. Youth will follow entities and institutions that are willing to hear and allow them to share their gifts and talents in the immediate time with the appropriate guidance modeled by Jesus and His disciples.

Christian education transmits a clarion call for believers to acknowledge the immanence and transcendence of God who holds all of creation in holy regard. It is crucial and imperative that God's pathos for humankind are manifested throughout the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

entire earth as commissioned by Christ with knowledge and understanding of the theological relationship God desires with people.

Testimonials of God's paradigm of calling, anointing, and equipping teenagers and young adults appear throughout Scripture. God exhibited a high regard for youth by anointing biblical youth for massive task, that deeply affected the Creator's plans for humanity. This call into vocational ministry is critical for continuing of the local and universal church. God created Christian education as a mechanism that guarantees present and future generations the opportunity to hear and accept the Word.

Christian education is a shared growth process within the Christian community, which must model Jesus' leadership, preaching, and teaching methodologies. Christian educators must disseminate liberating and transformative messages for both student and teacher. This is essential for teenagers and young adults called into vocational ministry while developing their faith, experiencing normal growing pains and for some, facing trials and tribulations because of their social location in life.

Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster wrote in their book, *The Godbearing Life*: “We must recognize what is going on in young people because of their “social location,” which includes their gender, racial and ethnic background, and economic place in society as well as their geography and generation.”⁸

Cultural and societal concerns significantly influence how Biblical truths should be taught in Christian education classes. Liberation and transformation can represent a

⁸ Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster. *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1998), 167.

plethora of meanings for youth. Scripture reveals Jesus Christ as humanity's liberator. He came to "proclaim release to the captives."⁹

The process of Christian education preparing and serving the Body of Christ is eminently critical for the teenagers and young adults called into vocational ministry. Christian education within the context of the local church fosters a safe environment, rightly equipping and guiding spiritual formation, which nurtures while providing the knowledge and understanding of God's plan of salvation. The praxis of Christian education allows youth to identify and understand their "embryonic faith."¹⁰ This is the faith developing out of poverty, racism, family, and environmental issues to name a few.

Scholarly resources focus on adolescence, youth, and young adult ministries rather than ministries for youth discerning a call into vocation ministry. The research suggests overlapping age ranges and definitions for each category are used interchangeably. Youth, ages twelve to twenty-five, are the focus in this ministry project.

Research articles and analyses included information on local church and church-based programs for training teenagers for ministry. They include documents posted by *The Fund for Theological Education* (FTE) that supplied the researcher with a list of grant recipients, who developed ministry training programs for teenagers and young adults *Youth Development* by Lott Carey, a project funded by FTE. Based on that examination, the researcher interviewed two FTE grantees: Rev. Ethel Southern,

⁹ Luke 4:18b.

¹⁰ Dean and Foster, *The Godbearing Life*, 168.

Covenant United Church of Christ in Dolton, Illinois and Rev. Darren DeMent at the Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. After initially contacting them, both shared information about their vocational ministry programs.

The examination of scholarly data begins with Kenneth H. Hill, who states, “The character of education that is Christian demands that it become concerned with the whole family of God.”¹¹ Teenagers and young adults represent the generational culture within society that God calls to secure the existence of future builders of the church through the praxis of developing their spiritual gifts while ministering to the world.

Kenneth Hill addresses the issue of youth by stating, “Clergy tend to view their congregation as adult oriented.”¹² The ramifications of this practice he adds is that, “More attention is paid to programs for youth than the ministries to youth.”¹³ African American churches responding to the social and economic needs of the community have consistently developed educational, athletic, business, financial, and other programs designed to deliver its people out of the residual bondages of slavery. This description of acute pain is reflective of the condition of oppressed, disenfranchised, and marginalized peoples around the world many of which have not heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ’s taught in truth and faith which speak of saving delivering power for all members of society.

¹¹ Kenneth Hill, *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2007), 58.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Andrew Park's discussion on the "theology of seeing"¹⁴ provides a foundation for understanding God's ability to see the need for humanity's salvation and designing all creation for the plan before Adam and Eve's fall in the Garden of Eden. He states, God reveals reality and we perceive God's revelation... our seeing is as crucial as God's revelation."¹⁵ The reality for the church is that God through the works of the Holy Spirit reveals the call and spiritual gifts given to youth within the body of the church. The failure of leadership to see, discern, and recognize their call affects the effectiveness of the church to fulfill God's will for humanity.

"Inseparable from God's revelation, seeing is the key to bringing salvation and liberation to creation."¹⁶ Through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, believers become more like Christ, which equips one to see the social and spiritual needs of society. In Luke 10:2 Jesus tells His disciples that *the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few*.¹⁷ God answers the prayers of church leadership for more workers by calling youth into vocational ministry who are compassionate about the harvest field. The insufficient supply of labors rest within is the church's failure to see and prepare teenagers and youth adults for reaping the harvest.

¹⁴ Andrew Sung Parks, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books), 129.

¹⁵ Ibid., 129-30.

¹⁶ Ibid., 130.

¹⁷ NIV.

Laurie Beth Jones states in her book, *Jesus CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership*, states,” He troubled himself on behalf of God’s behalf, and on the behalf of others.”¹⁸ Jesus’ unmatched compassionate love for God and those He descended from heaven to give His life in exchange for the sins of the world portrays the depth of God’s desire to redeem humanity from eternal death. He interrupted a majestic life in heaven with the angles to experience all the growing pains of a child to become the liberating Lord and Savior.

Hill quotes Jacquelyn Grant and Janet Pais who advocates a “theology of liberation for all humankind that includes children and youth.”¹⁹ The relationship between older generations and youth precludes youth from walking in their calling because of the stereotyping that exist in society regarding youth’s music, clothing preferences, and ideologies regarding religion. “By placing a greater emphasis on the vocation, youth ministry offers a holistic connection that Jesus embraced when he received youth in his arms and blessed them.” Jesus welcomed youth...when we receive God’s creative word in the flesh-God the Son (or Child)-we receive God the Child incarnate.”²⁰ Stated earlier in the introduction, God’s *kairos* is omnipresent regarding all things in heaven and earth. Humanity’s chronological age is not a prerequisite for service in the king, but rather an example and source for God’s sovereign diversity in the kingdom.

¹⁸ Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership* (New York: Hyperion, 1995), 148.

¹⁹ Hill, *Religious Education in the Black Perspective*, 159.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 158.

The praxis of developing youth for vocational ministry is no different from preparing adults for service God's kingdom. All generations bring their own set of challenges and ideologies relevant to their subculture; age, status in life, home life, family beliefs, economic status, education, age, gender and so on that must be addressed while serving in the kingdom of God.

Benjamin Stephens III and Ralph Watkins, states, "they [young adults] don't want to be set aside and treated like they are the church of the future; they want to be active in the life of the church today."²¹ They assert that contemporary youth today are not interested in waiting. Youth are earnestly seeking relevant positions in the life of the local church that celebrate their voice. Teenagers and young adults seek a church that discern, nurture and guide members of all ages.

The desired praxis of relationship in ministry models Jesus and His disciples. The ability to grow, share their skills, and contribute as leaders in the local congregation are youths' expectation. Some youth believe the local church fails to recognize the knowledge young adults possess that can serve to transforms their contemporaries as well older generations within the church.

Youth are the voice reflecting changing cultural ills that threatens their future, which makes their role in fulfilling the Great Commission more prevalent for the continuum of the church. Emphasis on the development of independent thinking, discerning their calling and struggles in life and within the church must be addressed. Thomas H. Groome's work models Dean's theology of Christian education. He contends

²¹ Benjamin Stephens III and Ralph Watkins, *From Jesus to Jay Z: Reaching and Teaching Young Adults in the Black Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2009), 8.

that the focus of Christian Religious education is the context, approach, nature, purpose, stages and the role of the teacher. Each element serves to accommodate, facilitate, and guide participants in spiritual growth and understanding of God's word.

Groome contends that teachers are obligated to hear what students say and to guide participants toward developing their own story and vision. He contends that students are called for the same purpose of being history makers.²² Kingdom building is a shared praxis of the Christian community shaping history toward ongoing/coming of the God's kingdom. Teenagers and young adults can make history as they join in bringing the word of the Lord to light in contemporary society.

Shared praxis accommodates Christians to live the liturgy in which they study; Groome quotes John Dewey, "We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment."²³ Paul's instructions to God's young servant Timothy, serve as a witness to God's intent for church elders to continue preparing the next generation for vocational ministry, the continuum of Christ's church.

Christian education must address the issues youth called into vocational ministry face as they grow in faith and practice their gifts of ministry with the body. This does not mean that they will receive monumental tasks like Jeremiah and other youth found in scripture. It does, however indicate that God has anointed them individually for a special purpose. They are the voice for homeless classmates, speak biblical truth to a youth who are confused about their sexuality, lead lost souls to Christ.

²² Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision*. (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1980), 264.

²³ Ibid., 225.

Scholarly literature supports that the disenfranchised and marginalized members of society must be enlightened of biblical truth that assures spiritual liberation and transformation as well as a liberated earthly life. Every promise given from God's promises of hope, love, joy, freedom, and peace includes all humanity regardless of one's gender, age, ethnicity, and economic status.

An accurate perception of God's Word being infallible and truth is the catalyst which under girds the mission of the Christian church. Gardner C. Taylor pens, "...the pastor [Christian educators] must teach who God is, who we are, and what our relationship with God should be."²⁴ It is imperative for church leadership to guide teenagers and young adults called into vocational ministry to a discerning awakening of God as the Divine Authority who calls individuals to service. Knowing God as the Creator whose pathos is holistic for all people reflects the Word's intended relationship between all members of society.

Joseph V. Crockett states in his book *Teaching Scripture From An African American Perspective*, "The character of education that is Christian demands that it becomes concerned with the whole family of God."²⁵ The exclusion of youth in ministerial training, which an element of Christian education, usurps youth's ability to function on the level of Christendom that God called them to serve in the kingdom. It fails to commission youth through the authority of the church to go and teach sound Biblical doctrines taught by the church.

²⁴ Samuel D. Proctor, Gardner C. Taylor, *We Have This Ministry: The Heart of the Pastor's Vocation* (Valley Forge PA: Judson Press, 1996), 17-18.

²⁵ Crockett, *Teaching Scripture*, 64.

American youth called into vocational ministry stands in the middle of the past, present and future struggles inflicted by the dominant society. Liberating Christian education historically has been the quintessential means for transformation within the African American community allowing the community to refute false doctrines initiated to turn away from the church. Luke 4:18 has been the source foundation used from slavery to present day to catapult the community out of bondage.

The major issues faced by youth in today's society are multifaceted. The widening gap between the have and have not, new description of family, technology, and the consistent miss education of disenfranchised and marginalized communities gives youth called into ministry a new standard by which they must articulate the Word of God to the world in which they live. Early African Americans preached a liberation message that enlightened its community about God's will for captives to be set free from the snares of bondage imposed by the dominant society.

Today, youth in ministry must counter governmental laws under the auspices of political correctness that opposes God's Word. Grant S. Shockley states in *The Pastor As Religious Educator* that it is imperative for Christian education to speak, teach, act congruently, coherently, and consistently in helping individuals make moral, social, economic, and political decisions in the spirit of their Christian faith. Michael Neil, while speaking with his students during a peer session, states, "The Word never changes, teachers and preachers of the Word must stay the course in spite of societal norms."²⁶

Individual change, transformation, and spiritual growth are essential products of Christian education. The process includes the guidance from pastors, ministers, and

²⁶ Michael Neil, Fall Peer Session, Union Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC. (October 9, 2013).

individuals who understand the social and spiritual struggles associated with discerning God's call into vocational ministry.

Through teaching methods, this project of Christian education seeks first to cultivate the knowledge of God's sovereign authority as the One who calls individuals into vocational ministry. Second, it seeks to introduce and examine God's paradigm of calling youth throughout Scripture into vocational ministry. Third, it seeks to enhance and enlighten participants to the magnitude of the Biblical and contemporary youth's assignments that are significant to God's plan of salvation as adult servants. Fourth, the program proposes to assist the youth in identifying their spiritual gifts given by God through the Holy Spirit for the edification of the local church body.

Churches consistently offer programs designed to enhance the academic achievement and career development of teenagers and young adults. There is an absence of a teaching ministry for teenagers and young adults who are discerning God's call into vocational ministry. Teenagers and young adults who are experiencing God's call often struggle alone in trying to decipher what God is revealing in their life. Often the support communities: parents, school, family, and friends are not aware of the call because the youth is concerned about their reaction.

Youth discerning God's call require a special preparatory ministry that allows them to explore their feelings, concerns, joy, and fears regarding their call. Societal and family idiosyncrasies distort youths' understanding of their call and God's patterns for change. Youth experience many of the same tensions as adults in their calling. God speaks to them through the works of the Holy Spirit but with added strains that can come from their peers.

A Christian education ministry designed specifically for teenagers and young adults can provide youth with the necessary support and spiritual guidance for maneuvering through the season of discernment. The absence of such can be perceived as an indication that teenagers to be too immature and lack life experience for the praxis preparing for and sharing their ministry skills with the Body.

Paul instructs Timothy, “Let no man despise your youth” (1 Tim. 4:12). Preacher and author Jawanza Kunjufu states, “Seventy percent of females and 90 percent of males may be leaving the church because they feel despised.”²⁷ Socialization is an intricate factor in the life of teenagers and young adults who want have a sense of acceptance in all aspects of their life. Adult leaders consulting with youth called into vocational ministry significantly supports a communication system designed by God for the wisdom of the elders to hear the needs of the young to work together to secure the continuum of the church. God gifts youth called with discernment to identify their social and spiritual needs of their generation.

Crockett offers pungent general Christian education questions that support the necessity for a ministry training program designed for youth called to vocational ministry. Christian education is the concern for the entire family of God. Crockett questions, “Who is missing from the teaching/learning experience?”²⁸ Young adults and teenagers are absent from the disciplining process that prepares those called into

²⁷ Jawanza Kunjufu, *What Is The Role of Teens in Your Church?*, 3.

²⁸ Crockett, *Teaching Scripture*, 61.

vocational ministry by God. Formal and informal training for local clergy is usually nonexistent for youth. Many occupy pews waiting while asking, “When does preparation for ministry begin?”

The preparation process for vocational ministry begins the moment God calls youth into vocational ministry. Churches recognizing God’s immanent authority in calling partners with the Creator’s plan by providing Christian and ministry education for all levels of development for all generations, genders, and spiritual gifts within the Body.

Dori Grinenko Baker, research fellow at the Fund for Theological Education, presents examples of churches that grow young Christian leaders. The book is ecumenical and culturally diverse with texts from Cornell West to Kenda Creasy Dean. She presents a collection of ministry stories and scenarios where youth, pastors, church leaders, and laypersons their intergenerational ministry leadership experiences. Their testimonies and experiences as members of congregations growing young Christian leaders support the researcher’s argument for a ministry program for youth called into vocational ministry.

Baker reflects on comments made by a twenty six-year-old who describes her church, First Afrikan Church, as providing a space that “honors young people’s presence; shares information and decision making with them; and creates a dialogical model that serves as a corrective to the hierarchical models.”²⁹ The non-hierarchical church model used here recognizes the gifts of every generation represented within the congregation. It affords youth and adults the opportunity to experience the praxis of learning while

²⁹ *Greenhouse of Hope: Congregations Growing Young Leaders Who Will Change the World*, ed. Dori Grinenko Baker (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2010), 156.

“running together for a space in time.”³⁰ It accommodates the critical transfer of the accumulated wisdom of the past to a new generation of church leaders.³¹

This concept models the selection process Christ used when calling His disciples. He walked with the disciples instilling God’s words by studying the Scriptures, teaching through parables, healing the sick, and raising the dead while guiding their individual spiritual growth for God’s kingdom. The praxis of Jesus’ methodology for equipping His disciples enabled them minister as they learned. The preparation the disciples received for ministry provided a seamless ministerial transition for the continuum of kingdom building after Jesus departed back to heaven.

Christian education designated for youth within the local church considering seminary provides a foundation for the amalgamation of theology, spiritual formation, and transformation. A foundation in theological themes taught by clergy within the context of the local church enhances youths’ ability to learn sound biblical doctrine while enhancing academic success while embracing their call. The church often offer programs designed to develop youth for academic achievement, business and other area of study enhance in efforts to lucrative employment rather than train them for a life in vocational ministry.

The same effort is needed for developing future leaders of the church to encourage, guide, and provide a safe environment for spiritual formation that is prevalent to their special call to serve in God’s kingdom. A God-centered Christian

³⁰ Ibid., 152.

³¹ Ibid.

education vocational ministry designed for youth can afford youth to explore bi-vocational career options that would facilitate their ability to serve God within and outside the walls of the church while obtaining both biblical and theological knowledge for their life's work.

The differentiation between youth Bible/Sunday school lessons and lectures in theology classes in seminaries or divinity schools often prompt disillusionments that cause the youth to question Christianity and its doctrines. Howard Rowdon states, "it is the responsibility of the church to prepare clergy." He contends that divinity schools and seminaries "primordial" mission is academia, encumbered in theology.³² The missing element of ministerial training is the spiritual development of youth called to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ in truth and faith. Perry Downs states, that, "students must acquire biblical and theological categories for thinking Christianly."³³ It is the knowledge of God's word and disseminating it with clear understanding God's purpose and plan for humanity.

Christian education is the sustaining thread that weaves every ministry within the church body from the custodians to the shepherd of the local congregation. Through Christian education, every member of the Body of Christ may internalize God's Word in preparation for equipping other Christians and introducing nonbelievers to Christ.

³² Harold H. Rowdon, "Theological Education in Historical Perspective," *Vox Evangelica* 7 (1971): 75-87, Accessed July 11, 2013, www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/vox/vol07/education_rowdon.pdf.

³³ Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House 1994), 179.

Howard Hendricks remarks, “through Christian education one begins to recognize God’s patterns for change in the lives of individuals, particularly those called into ministry.”³⁴

Christian education is the thread that equips believers as they elevate spiritually and socially through life’s journey. Youth discerning a call into vocational ministry yearn for an inclusive safe environment that recognizes, accepts, and equips them for ministry in the present and future. Scholarly resources regarding teenagers and young adults called into vocational ministry primarily disclosed information pertaining to adolescence, youth, and young adult ministries. There were overlapping age ranges and definitions for each term, indicating that the terms are often used interchangeably. The focus of this study is geared towards high school teenagers generally aged 12-17 and young adults aged 18-24 year olds.

Spiritual Autobiography

Brenda Jean Jones Robinson, the first-born to the union of Joseph and Mary Jones was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in 1950. God blessed her with six sisters, one from her mother’s first marriage. Both paternal grandparents were deceased, which presented Miss Catherine, a family friend and a devout sanctified woman, with the opportunity to take Joseph and Mary’s first-born daughter to service on Sundays. Etched in the writer’s spirit are the Holy Ghost-filled services, which included electrified preaching, teaching, and singing as Miss Catherine sung songs of praise to the Lord.

In the early 1952’s, the family migrated to Chicago Heights, Illinois, a south suburb of Chicago. Summer vacations back to Alabama to visit maternal grandparents

³⁴ Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, 45.

Douglas and Emma Waiters, included singing and history lessons as neighbors sat, discussed the ills of Jim Crow, gossiped, and praised God on their long country porch. Grandma Emma encouraged her to sing hymns and spirituals while everyone sipped old-fashioned sweet ice tea after dinner.

Grandmother saw the anointing on her grandchild when everyone else thought she just had a pretty voice. In 1955, St. Bethel Baptist Church (St. Bethel) in Chicago Heights, Illinois became the family's church where the Rev. J. A. Causey was the pastor. The church offered the Red Circles,³⁵ the Baptist Training Union, Vacation Bible School, Sunday school, choir, and a junior usher board for children.

Her father sung in the choir and Mama served on the nurse's aide board. Brenda's parents modeled Christian love by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and parenting with strong hands. She sung her first solo "Now Let the Sun Shine In" during a special children's program. An inner call and sense to the children's choir grew as she continued to sing solos on all youth programs the church offered. At age eight, an inner call to the children's choir was strong for she loved singing God's praises and she understood that church membership and baptism was required before joining the choir.

On Sunday after the eighth birthday, sitting in an old wooden folding chair, she began wondering what she was going to say when asked, "Why do you want to join this church?" When Rev. Causey opened the doors of the church, she proceeded down the

³⁵ The Red Circles was a Baptist missionary training program for children. It met on Saturdays and some Sunday evenings.

aisle knowing she could not tell him she was joining because she wanted to sing in the choir. She kept walking and wondering until he asked the most important question in her life.

It was at that moment of questioning, she had her first encounter with the Holy Spirit. She opened her mouth and said, “Because I want to go to heaven when I die.” What joy filled her little soul! Looking up, Brenda saw a ray of sunlight shining down on her through the church ceiling. Filled with the Holy Spirit, everything became bright and sunny as she felt God’s presence in the church.

Another encounter with the Lord appeared at age twelve after singing the solo “Peter Go Ring Them Bells” with the junior choir at one of the church’s monthly Sunday night musicals. While lying in bed at home, a light suddenly began to shine through the window. First thinking it was a car light, but quickly realizing the window was on the second floor, car lights never reach the window, the Holy Spirit revealed Himself. She felt the spirit of the Lord upon her.

Brenda failed first grade and did not think she was very bright academically much of her life. She failed the music test at which time the music teachers recommended that she should not study an instrument, stating that she did not have an aptitude for music. Daddy disagreed, asking her “what she wanted to do,” and purchased a used violin for Brenda and her sister Sheila to share. They played for one year and quit after a horrible attempt of performing a violin duo at the church youth program.

That same year after her twelve-old encounter with the Holy Spirit, the family purchased a home and moved Harvey, Illinois, which was approximately fifteen miles north of St. Bethel. A year later, Mrs. Gladys Kendrick (Nell) became her first Black

music teacher making failing first grade a blessing in relationship to her musical gifts.

Mrs. Kendricks, a young Christian from Mississippi recognized the writer's gift for singing and, with parental approval, began giving her private voice lessons. God provided many opportunities for ministry that included singing for Mahalia Jackson in a concert in Chicago Heights when she was fifteen-years old.

Ministering through music before noted Gospel singers, such as Jesse Dixon and Cassietta George, became a way of life. The researcher remembers singing a solo, "Talk About a Child That Do Love Jesus, Here is One." at Omega Baptist Church where Jessie Dixon was minister of music. The song was her testimony, "I've been 'buked, [sic] I been scorn, I've been talked about, as sure as you're born." Brenda became a soloist throughout her public school years sing anthems and spirituals at state music competitions.

Her siblings, cousins, and other church youth members often teased and laughed when she experienced the presence of Holy Spirit as a teenager. Many youth considered her too serious and different from others in the school, church, and community. The responsibility of caring for younger siblings in the absence of their parents facilitated early maturity and a life that caused her to seek refuge in her music.

A multicultural high school music experience became an ecumenical music experience. She enjoyed singing diverse sacred music genres in an array of church denominations. The writer enjoyed fellowshiping and worshipping in the house of God in spite of its many flaws. A by-product of sibling care giving, the gift of hospitality manifested itself in church and school. Teachers consistently guided Brenda to befriend classmates with special needs ostracized by other students. Feelings of inadequacy

because of her academic failures coupled with her successes in music produced within her a compassionate and caring heart for others that many people did not understand. Often, the associations with unpopular students and other races caused her much pain, especially during the civil rights movement of the 1960's.

Classical voice training became a source of rejection for Brenda as some church elders and family members questioned Brenda's parents about the emphasis on "white folk's music." Black religious music was changing; Edward Hawkins and Andre Crouch replaced the "Wings Over Gordon Choir" and the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Professional classical vocal instructors deemed the emerging gospel music harsh on the vocal chords and that the genre introduced by young gospel choirs and groups did not belong in God's house of worship.

On one occasion, invited as a guest soloist by the minister of music of a Black church to sing Mallote's arrangement of the Lord's Prayer for a special Sunday afternoon program, the Pastor did not appreciate the rendition, calling it not of the Black experience. She enjoyed sharing her God given gift and talents with others, particularly in church. It was a time in the nation's history where doors were opening for black youth academically and in other professions formerly closed to the African American community. She wanted to do what Dr. Martin Luther King charged Black Americans: do your best, whatever your occupation.

During the summer of 1971, against her will, Ms. Gladys Kendricks drafted her into Miss Black America contest, which results proved to be a ministry opportunity of a lifetime for Brenda. Under the direction of Ms. Kendricks, Brenda performed Verdi's aria "Pace Pace Mio Dio." She was criticized much for singing the "white man's" music.

However, she was second runner-up and named Miss Congeniality. A representative from the college and university arm of the United Service Organization (USO) Alan Sherman, Dean of the College of Cultural Studies at Governors State University served as a judge for the pageant.

The USO is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that provides moral and recreational support to United States (US) military personnel abroad and stateside. After the contest, Dr. Sherman arranged a financial aid and music scholarship package that provided the direction and funds for Brenda's education. Two weeks before the start of her junior year at Governors State, she began rehearsals in Dallas, Texas for a USO tour of the Fifth Army stateside.

The following summer, 1972, the writer spent three months ministering along with ten other students, a music professor, and the dean of cultural studies, entertaining American soldiers in Japan, Korea, Guam, Taiwan, Philippines, and Okinawa. God prepared her for this ministry by way of her spirit and her gift of a culturally diverse music repertoire. A featured soloist for the troupe, Brenda, accompanied by an escorted, ministered to bed-bound soldiers through various music genres: hymns country western, folk songs, Negro spirituals, and the classics.

God sent a student servant from a university to minister to wounded and brokenhearted soldiers fighting in the unpopular Vietnam War. The damages of the war were more than the eyes dare to observe as she sung in military hospitals where young soldiers with lost limbs, stomachs partially blown away, lonely, and lost hope spoke often about the condition of the world. In the mist of their suffering, she became weary and tired asking God for strength to continue.

Commanding officers often demanded unscheduled performances in spite of USO policies requiring cancellation when a troupe traveled more than five hours within a day. GIs felt disenfranchised for not winning the Viet Nam war therefore, the performances served to lift the soldiers' moral as the writer learned humility. A typhoon grounded the troupe for a week allotting more rehearsal time, rest, and exploration of the culture.

Accommodations on base were not available, forcing the troupe to stay in a hotel for a week in downtown Tokyo. Together, the women pooled their resources to pay for a hotel room in Tokyo. The writer's luggage disappeared for two weeks somewhere between flights, which required her to borrow clothes from classmates and, purchase clothes with her dwelling financial resources. The emergency funds sent by her father never arrived.

A visit to the Peace Museum in Tokyo Japan revealed the ravages of war that fell on innocent victims during World War II. Pictures of disfigured children, glass bottles melted like wax, and people's shadows burned into cement steps gave her and the other students much to think about God and the inhuman world. This coupled with the site of street child left behind by American soldiers and singing in orphanages in Korea became a source enhancing her ministry to youth in her adult life.

The Holy Spirit revealed Himself again to her in of the dark back corner of the stage while performing in Guam. Minutes before her next solo, tired and worn, she uttered a cry for help from God. The instrumental accompaniment to the Negro Spiritual "*Sinner Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass*" would begin in seconds as she cried out "I need you Lord, I'll open my mouth, and You do it." Everything became black except for

the light shining from heaven, which was greater than the high-powered stage lights lining the stage ceiling. At the end of the program, a young soldier remarked that she had touched his soul, convicted, in keeping a promise to his grandmother, he would attend church the coming Sunday.

At twenty-one the writer became a member of Christ Temple Baptist Church just before leaving for the USO tour and continued for a while after she returned. Churches did not appear to focus more on education, building wealth and becoming members of the status quo rather than spiritual formation for young adults. Black teenagers and young adults faced changing world within their culture that included myriad of social issues that often the church failed to address that began to threaten the spiritual well being of Brenda and other youth.

The growth of inter-city gangs; black power verses peaceful demonstrations; the resistance of equal opportunity laws by the dominant society; the demise of many black families when laws forced fathers to leave their homes so their children could eat became major issues that she felt the suburban churches failed to address. The thrust toward financial security in the land of opportunity became divisive evils as many successful Blacks within the community denounced those they left behind in deteriorating communities labeling them lazy and shameful. Shamefully, this along with the normal growing pains, her personal concerns of her parents failing marriage, death of her grandmother, Nell away pursuing her doctorate, and the inhuman images of war served to disconnect her from the church. There was enough pain and suffering in the world and the churches seemed self-absorbed.

Six months after graduating from Governors State, she became an adjunct teacher at Triton Community College and Central YMCA High School teaching African American music history at the college and music appreciation at the alternative high school. She left home and moved in with Steve, a non-practicing Catholic whom she dated for four years. Life was not pleasing. Convicted, crying at the sight of a church, guilt for leaving younger siblings behind and singing in church only for weddings and funerals became her daily life. Feeling like a fish out of water, after almost two years of living together, the writer told Steve the relationship had to end unless they married. United before a judge, they have been married for thirty-eight years. God's grace and mercy has kept them together in service in spite of their youthful disobedience to God.

After the birth of her precious sons, Steven Brandon and Brent Seneca, and visiting several churches, God spoke to the writer commanding her to "raise the boys in church." Their relationship with God and salvation became a priority for the family. Guilt and shame prevailed each time she attended services. How was it possible for an anointed person to live in sin? What happened? In obedience, following several visits, New Faith Baptist Church (New Faith) became their church home. Nell was a member and invited the writer to sing for the women's day program. The choir sang "Yes Lord" as the invitation as she and her family took the deacon's hand. At age thirty-four, full of uncontrollable tears, the writer was home.

In 1995, the choir recorded their second album, "Let Mount Zion Rejoice." Brenda was the soloist. Humbled, the writer did not listen to the recording until one day she heard it on a gospel radio station. The writer was amazed but realized something deeper was happening, the manifestation of God in other areas of her life.

Over the years, the writer served as an administrator for the disenfranchised and marginalized enrolled in para-church organizations, such as the Salvation Army's work release program for offenders and New World Christian Ministries' community service program for children and youth in Chicago funded by the Mayor's Office of Employment and Training. God blessed the writer with a position at Moraine Valley Community College to develop programs for disadvantaged youth in the community college district.

The desire to assist the least among us provided her opportunity to lobby in the National and State Capitols, speaking directly to lawmakers, on behalf the marginalized of all races in society. Brenda often through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit challenged her superiors to approve programs she designed to enhance the holistic well being of the youth they served. At one residential agency, students found it difficult to pass the General Education Development Test (GED), which enhanced their ability to obtain and retain employment.

Serving on the local county's Youth Advisory Council alongside the local community college and high school deans, she formulated a proposal for a mutual agreement between the entities for a high school diploma. The regional director for her training vocational program stated that it appeared to be impossible and would never work. She responded, that God gave her the assignment and he said, "If God gave it to you, then we must do it." The high school program won the highest national award as students matriculated through to enjoy a better life in society and fulfill God's plan for their life.

A call to serve at Joliet Job Corps opened the door for the writer to serve as a witness of the power, grace, and mercy for disenfranchised youth.³⁶ Serving in several administrative capacities, primarily public relations enlightened the writer about how many members of society preferred giving funds to combat social ills rather than develop with those oppressed and abused. During the nine years spent at Job Corps, youth received Christ in her office and staff frequently requested prayer and spiritual encouragement.

One day, while sitting in her office feeling the burden of ministering to the young adults she had a “Jesus visit.” The center director previously distributed a memo to staff stating that there was too much religion going on in the center. Thinking about all the issues the students faced, the writer sat in her office wearing her coat, staring at a wooden credenza.

The credenza appeared to move like the snow on a malfunctioning television screen. It looked like everyone’s junk, sins moving around on the screen. The Lord pressed down on the writer’s right shoulder, the same Divine touch used to keep the writer from flying through car window in a car accident in 1991. The writer heard, “Your cross is easy, Brenda, because I am here with you. I bore the weight of all the sins of the world for those who lived and those yet to come.” You must pick your cross and follow me (paraphrased).” At age 52, forty years after the twelve-year-olds bedroom experience,

³⁶ Job Corps-US Department of Labor, Accessed March 1, 2012, www.dol.gov>...>Training. Job Corps is a federally funded program operated by private not-for-profits designed to provide education and training for economically disadvantaged youth seeking to improve their status in life.

a formal call into vocational ministry changed her life. Later, thinking about the many doctrines in the world, afraid and asking what to say to the people, the Lord simply replied, “I AM is the only One who got up from the grave”.

After completing a Master’s degree in Religion and praying for direction, God sent the writer to serve as an associate minister at her classmate’s church, No Division Christian Church in Chicago’s Englewood community, while maintaining her membership at New Faith. God allowed the writer to minister to a group of youth playing basketball in a high crime area. Wondering what to say, the Spirit said, “Just say Hi,” to a young man who stood beside the writer. In dialoguing, he asked if God cared about them. God spoke through the writer, the young man received by asking God into his heart. While serving in Chicago, the writer’s son, Steven Brandon, transitioned to heaven.

The sweetness of Jesus showed the writer a vision of her son, Brandon with his maternal great-grandmother, Emma, who transitioned to heaven seven years prior to his birth. Scripture states, *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*³⁷ This is the basis for this ministry project, preparing youth for vocational ministry to assure everyone to reside eternally with the Lord.

The Ministry Project Context

Blackhawk Elementary school in Park Forest, Illinois was the birthplace of New Faith’s first worship service on January 4, 1976. The first pastor, Rev. Junius Dudley,

³⁷ Romans 8:28.

preached to sixty-seven worshippers at that first service. Park Forest was the ideal place to start a new church that would offer an African-American style of worship.

After completing a study of churches in the Park Forest area, Rev. Dudley appealed to Rev. Dale Cross of the Southern Baptist Convention to make New Faith a plant church. The church became a member of the Convention in 1975, resulting in supplemental income for the pastor and access to the Convention's myriad of resources. The membership grew swiftly to 150 members.³⁸ Rev. Dudley's retirement in 1978 opened the door for the second pastor, Rev. Donald Johnson, to lead the congregation. Rev. Dr. Frank A. Thomas became the third pastor in 1982. Under his leadership, the congregation purchased five acres of land in Matteson, IL. The writer's family joined the church in 1984. On October 12, 1984, New Faith broke ground for its new house of worship in Matteson. On Sunday, February 22, 1987, reportedly, 287 members praised and worshiped God at this new facility.

Soon the New Faith congregation grew to more than 1,600 members. The location of the church was instrumental in the rapid growth of the church. Several new housing developments within a two-mile radius of the church were fertile grounds for evangelism. The church purchased additional acres of adjacent land in 1992. The original building design included a removable wall behind the pulpit and choir stand that could be pushed back to increase the size of the sanctuary. Moving the wall allowed 300 additional seats in the sanctuary in order to accommodate the growing membership.

³⁸ "New Faith Community: We Shall Prevail in 2012", Accessed April 5, 2012, <http://www.newfaithbaptist.org>.

Numerous youth programs existed at the church. Jesus and Me (JAM) served an average of three hundred and sixty high school students on Monday nights. Other programs included Helping Young People Excel Helping Young People Excel (HYPE) for junior high school youth, a drama department, praise dancing, youth summer camp retreats, lock-ins, old school/new school basketball tournaments, Boy Scouts and youth Bible studies.

Under Pastor Frank, membership grew steadily. The growth brought economically diverse families seeking the Word, ministries, and services provided by New Faith. Members representing the major ministries in the church, deacons, usher board, trustees, and choir governed the church. Bulletins and announcement informed the congregation of vacancies and the application process.

Eventually, the board selected a youth who served the search committee after Pastor Frank's resignation. A myriad of internal divisive issues manifested as the church grew in ministry and size. It became a breeding ground for business networking and elitist postures, spirits of confusion and division among the saints. Soon, Pastor Frank accepted a new assignment at Mississippi Boulevard Church in Memphis, Tennessee. He ended his tenure with New Faith after eighteen years of service.

The writer had a vision from God one Sunday during service after Pastor Frank left New Faith. She saw God seated on the throne appearing to be playing chess with people. God spoke instructing her to sit up and look around the church. As she obeyed the command, God spoke again saying, "Look at them scurrying around. Don't [do not] they know I have everything under my control? Peace filled her soul as she continued to

fellowship in truth and faith. Pastor Frank's resignation resulted in an exodus of members, some of who were founders of the church.

Youth ministers provided a continuum of youth programs that served as many as three hundred adolescents present for Monday night JAM. However, there were situations where individual support for youth was void. The Church council selected Reverend Tyrone Crider as the interim pastor. During his year as interim pastor, a multipurpose room was added and classrooms to accommodate the outreach, missions, and congregational ministry needs of the church. The room accommodated also facilitated additional space for youth activities within the church. As the church continued to grow a big screen and alter was set-up to accommodate over three-hundred additional seats for the overflow of worshippers on Sunday mornings.

Reverend Dr. Trunell D. Felder became the fourth shepherd to pastor New Faith in October 1, 2001 after receiving 75% in his favor. Accepting God's call to New Faith in the midst of church turmoil, Pastor Felder and First Lady, Dr. Alexis committed themselves to moving the church forward spiritually by increasing mission services to the disenfranchised and marginalized members of society.

The commitment resulted in the birth of the "The Joseph Assignment." Through this ministry, community faith and health fairs provide a multitude of yearly services to communities within a 25-mile radius of New Faith. Youth regularly participate in many of the mission excursions such as health and back to school activities for the needy. Worldwide missions include services and support to African and South American; fourteen churches in Ghana, West Africa, and one in Capetown, South Africa. Medical and educational professionals travel to Africa with medical supplies, clothing and

educational materials to aid the needy in Ghana. New Faith installs wells, built and supported schools, and helped established five Ghanaian villages.

The training program for teenagers and young adults discerning a call into vocational ministry would increase the involvement of youth. The extended ministry would collaborate with the Pastor of Outreach/Missions to facilitate participant's special projects to meet the needs of their peers and worldwide youth associated with "The Joseph Assignment."

The 2010 Census indicates there were 19,000 people and 12,820 households. Of the 3,553 families residing in Matteson, twenty-seven percent had children under eighteen years old. The Church's 2011 membership was approximately one hundred-forty young adults, forty-six, fourteen to seventeen year olds; fourteen, eighteen to twenty-five year to thirty year olds regularly participate in ministries.³⁹

Approximately fourteen ministries are designed for children, teenagers, and young adults.⁴⁰ Implemented in January 2012, a new program offered several classes, such as Bible study, "Tumbling Entrepreneurship," Journalism (a partnership with the University of Illinois at Chicago), and "Cooking With a Chef" for high school students.⁴¹

The Wednesday night program for youth has a new name, New Faith Youth Community (NYC). Elder Parnell serves as youth minister with two others who share the ministry with him. The Christian education department has joined efforts with the youth ministry to provide enhanced leadership for the students. Youth can register for

³⁹ Kathy Stewart, e-mail message to author, May 31, 2012.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

basketball, karate, photography, cooking, Junior Achievement, and mentoring classes.

New Faith has also a partnership with Pathways, a not-for profit organization, to give youth access to college tours, fairs, and other educational services. However, New Faith lacks a leadership program designated specifically for youth Sunday school, who feel a calling into ministry.

New Faith provides two services for children during adult service, Saturday nights at 5:00 and Sunday morning at 11:00 for ages seven to eleven. The children's director trains junior high and high school students, Timothy's, to serve as aids during children's services. The praxis of this leadership program is spiritual growth and service to others while modeling Christ like behavior before the younger children.

New Faith offers an eleven o'clock youth service for high school and junior high school students in the Genesis sanctuary. Youth display their gifts and talents during "open microphone" every Sunday during their eleven o'clock service. Rappers, dancers, soloists and groups, musicians, budding teachers, and preachers are encouraged to share with their peers. The praxis of this nurturing environment enhances the ability of the youth to appreciate their gifts, as well as the gifts of others.

New Faith youth evangelize to their unsaved friends and family members. Annual youth and children's conferences that model the adult conferences feed the spirit of the youth as they share their faith with others. Speakers and worship leaders offer a myriad of ministry activities, which inspire both youth and their parents to remain faithful to their Christian faith. Through the years, many unsaved youth attending the conference have accepted God's gift of salvation for the remission of their sins.

A ministry program designated for teenagers and young adults discerning a call into vocational ministry would enhance the church efforts of activating Christ's commission to *go therefore and teach all nations* (Matt. 28:19).

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

God's biblical paradigm for calling youth to serve as messengers in the redemptive plan of salvation for humanity is a fundamental model for today's church. It also answers many questions concerning youth called into ministry. What is the role of youth called by God and how much responsibility should the church extend to teenagers and young adults? Are teenagers mature enough to teach and preach; or does their lack of experience and age supersede their call? Jeremiah's call and Timothy's massive assignments serve to answer the frequently asked questions by teenagers and young adults, parents, and church leadership who display varying ideologies to these questions.

The purpose of God's call to teenagers and young adults serves to assure the continuum of the eternal kingdom for generations to come. God's desire to commune with humanity facilitated the creation of the Old Testament tabernacle of the congregation out-sides of the Israel's camp allowing the world to come to know the Creator as their God. The failure of the congregation to fulfill God's ordinances prompted the actualization of God's plan of salvation through the establishment of the New Testament church built by the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ commission for believers to go into the world and teach the gospel to all people. The Biblical discussion begins with God's desire to dwell among the chosen nation and their neighbors.

God instructed Moses to erect the tabernacle *without the camp afar and to call the Tabernacle of the congregation* (Exodus 33:7) to serve as the place where God's presence manifested through a cloudy pillar could rest with the people called to serve as lights unto the world. God desired to dwell among the chosen people so that the world could also see the glory of the Lord. The Lord's glory cloud would appear above the entrance to signify God's Divine presence Exodus 33:7-10. This is an indication of God's intent for the whole world to partake in the redemptive plan of salvation that would restore the whole back to its rightful place in the kingdom.

God commands Moses to gather from the nation a myriad of materials; silver, gold, onyx stone, linen, and other items God called into being during the creation for use in the preparation of the tabernacle. Golden cherubims rested on the Mercy seat of God in the Holy of Holies where God would commune with the Israelites. (Exodus 25:17-22) Incense was to be burned perpetually in the mornings from the tabernacle *before the Lord throughout your generations* and the tabernacle existed for *everyone which sought the Lord* (Exodus 30:7-8) fulfilling God's expectations for continuous kingdom building in the world through the witnessing of future generations of the Israelites and other nations that would come to know the Creator. The rising smoke from the temple was visible by neighboring nations who could get a glimpse of God's glory and thus desirous to become members of the everlasting kingdom.

After the completion of the Tabernacle without the camp, God's presence manifested itself behind the veil where high priest fulfilled their appointed and anointed assignments to teach the Israelites how to accomplish their mission call as commanded by God. The utmost ministry of the priestly duties entailed leading common people to

their one and only God so that other nations would come to know God's redemption plan for everyone on earth. Instead, priests often actively worked against God's plan of redemption by denouncing God's messages and promoting idolatry usurping God's plan. Sometimes those called by God indulged in promoting idolatry as Aaron did in Exodus 32:4.

God's protective presence manifested itself by a pillar of cloud by day as their guide and fire by night to give light as the Israelites journeyed through the wilderness. (Ex. 33-20-21) Upon entering, the Promised Land the congregation's obedience was short lived in spite of God's redeeming signs and wonders as exemplified in Joshua 10:12. God commanded the sun to stand still for the Israelites to avenge their enemy. The evidence of God's power did not deter the nation's constant disobedience, commands, and calls to repentance, which under girded their rejection of the One and only God's provision, protection and love. The nation's continuous sin cycle and the tabernacle defilement by ungodly priests prevented God's from resting among the people and leading the way to the fulfillment of the ultimate and unfailing obedience of the Savior Jesus Christ.

New Testament youth served as agents in introducing Jesus and His Gospel of salvation to Jews and Gentiles. They were instructed to present the Word in truth and faith according to Jesus' Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:16-20 and fulfill it through Jesus' church, His bride, the universal body of believers called to model Christ as lights unto the dying world. Christ called the local church to be a house of worship for teaching, preaching and preparing believers to go out into the world spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Jews and Gentiles. The church's commission is to prepare local

members to care for the poor, sick, orphans and widows. Fellowshiping through praise and worship allows God to speak and give revelation and encourage believers in faith, which strengthens the body of Christ for kingdom building.

Larry and Lawrence Richards states, “Within the faith, false teachers intruded, infiltrating twisted doctrine and warped lifestyles”¹ Gnostics rejected the incarnation of God through Jesus, His death and the resurrection of Christ. This heresy infiltrating the early church mirrored the idolatrous posture and depravity of the false prophets and priests in the Old Testament. God’s call of youth in both Old and New Testaments weaves together the researcher’s premise that God still summons youth as spoke-persons for delivering the Word and the Word’s message to the world addressing the ills of current society.

Scripture notes the momentous calls given to youth that changed the history of their people and the world. In some cases, God spoke directly to them. In others, servants of God assisted youth in discerning their call to service. Notably, their assignments and messages of God’s redemption plan were no less substantial than their adult counter parts. God often called youth to deliver messages to humanity when adult leaders fail to fulfill their assignments, as noted with Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah. Sinful and idolatrous priest and prophets who actively worked against God’s plan of redemption for Israel and other nations surrounded him, yet, he maintained an obedient posture.

The New Testament records Timothy’s efforts to preach and teach the gospel in truth and faith in a society where many offered false doctrines to their congregations.

¹ Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *Introduction to 1, 2 Timothy; Titus – The Pastoral Letters: The Teacher’s Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), Exported from Logos Bible Software, November 17, 2012.

Youth who obeyed the Sovereign God's commands contributed a tremendous amount of service to the plan of salvation for the Creator's most valuable possession, humanity.

The Old Testament

*Then said I, Ah Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child.
Jeremiah 1:6-7b*

The Word of the Lord informed Jeremiah that before God formed him in the womb and his birth into the world, God knew him. The Lord ordained and sanctified Jeremiah to be a prophet unto the nations prior to shaping him into human form. Jeremiah's response to God's call is reflective of his inexperience, immaturity by cultural standards and fear of the magnitude of his assignment. God called the youth to preach repentance to the Israelites and prophesize to the nations so that they would return to their rightful place in God's kingdom.

Jeremiah was born in Anathoth around 626 B.C., and a descendant of the household of the priest Hilkiah. His father, Hilkiah, who some scholars believe to be the priest who found the "Book of the Law," Deuteronomy, in the temple in Jerusalem.² Lost for many years, the book contained God's instructions given to Moses for governing the Israelites during their wilderness experience. The discovery of God's instructions had been lost for many years and its discovery prompted young king Josiah's religious reforms to return Judah back to God as ministers to the world.³ The discovery of the

² Charles L. Feinberg, "Jeremiah," in *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations and Ezekiel*, vol. 6 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 358.

³ Ibid.

Book of the Law reflects the ungodly religious condition of Judah that resulted from the priest neglecting their responsibilities of teaching God's word to the nation so that other nations would come to the Lord.

God called Jeremiah during a transitional period in the life of the Israelites and Near Eastern history. He witnessed the fall of the Assyrian Empire and the rise of the Neo Babylonian Chaldean dynasty. Politically, Jerusalem's pending destruction would come under the hands of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar allowing the Neo-Babylonian Empire to play an important role in God's plan of redemption for humanity. Jeremiah's massive assignment required him to address Israel and other nation's political leaders as a messenger of God. Jeremiah's call required him to preach a message of repentance or doom to the Israelites in an effort to prevent the dismantlement of their nation.⁴ Religiously, the nation's sin cycle of disobedience, repentance and rescue would end displaying God's compassionate love for humanity.

Priests and prophets continued to indulge the common people by promoting idolatry that began with Aaron, the first priest, who fashioned a gold molten calf instead of leading the wayward Israelites to God's word. Aaron failed as a religious leader to equip the newly called servant nation for their missionary call to make God known to other nations through their obedience. Instead, the priest allowed the fearful people to return to the paganism of their oppressor and declare, *These be thy gods, O Israel.*⁵ wicked and evil prophets and priests defiled the Jerusalem temple, built for God to reside among the Israelites by filling it with idols and their relics (syncretism).⁶

⁴ Jer. 7:3.

⁵ Exodus. 32:4.

The religious leaders' disobedience was in direct conflict with God, who called the nation to play a preeminent role in the plan to redeem humanity back to its rightful place in the kingdom, after Adam and Eve's fall in the Garden of Eden. God's eventual wrath of the Northern Kingdom, approximately one hundred and thirty years earlier, with the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians in punishment for its continual idolatry and disobedience, failed to deter Judah from worshipping pagan gods.

God's pathos for the intended ministers to the world resulted in countless efforts by old and young messengers attempting to call the nation to repentance. Prophet Isaiah informed the nation of God's pending devastation and plans to scatter its inhabitants as punishment for their disobedience, which included individuals from all occupations including priest prior to the exile to Assyria.⁷

Throughout Israel's history some priest have neglected their call to teach and model ordinances that God created for spiritual formation for the chosen people and increasing the kingdom. Their appointment to the priesthood evolved solely because of their bloodline. The Creator called the Levites to care for the temple, teach the word of the Lord to the Israelites, and perform ritual services that assured continuous communication with God.⁸

Often the disobedient priest life styles precluded the nation's mission call to establish the name of God among pagan nations, defeating the redemptive plan for humanity. Samuel dismantled the Elidan system of generational priesthood because of the

⁶ Jer. 23:11.

⁷ Isa. 24:2.

⁸ Num. 3:5-10.

degenerate postures exhibited by priest Eli's sons, Phinehas and Hophni.⁹ Reflecting the disobedient acts by other ungodly priest, the brothers "disgraced their high calling and shocked the people so much that "men abhorred the offering of the Lord."¹⁰

Obedient Samuel, adhering to God's mission call for the Israelites, established and equipped young men [women] "the Sons of the Prophets" who are also referred to as "Band of Prophets." He gathered them from among pious priest and prophets [prophetess] to train in ministry for raising the religious knowledge and intellectual spiritual worship of the Israelites.¹¹ This would serve to open the minds of God's people to recognize their fruitless worship of fabricated gods that could not meet their needs. Increasing the Israelites' knowledge of their delivering God, the Creator who protects and guides their path would serve to enhance their ability to witness other nations.

Moses writes *the Lord will scatter you among the nations... and there serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, hear, eat nor smell.*¹² Only the true and living God could breathe life into inanimate objects, which would be counterproductive for the redemption plan. They received instruction in prophesying and worshipping God in groups as they carried out their ministry assignments in six locations: Carmel, Jericho, Samaria, Gilgal, Ramah, and Bethel to assure that everyone heard the

⁹ John W. Carter, "1 Sam. 3:1-4:1, Responding Faithfully to God's Call," in *The Disciple's Bible Commentary* (American Journal of Biblical Theology, 2000-2014), Accessed February 29, 2013, http://www.biblicaltheology.com/1sa/09_03_01.html.

¹⁰ 1 Sam. 2:17.

¹¹ Henry Adams Thompson, *The Schools of the Prophets: A Lecture* (Dayton: United Brethren Publishing, 1871), 43.

¹² Deut. 4:27-28.

word of God.¹³ Unfortunately, the Israelites' sin cycle continued long enough to vex their loving and compassionate God who called Jeremiah as the last effort to bring them to repentance and remain a nation in the land promised to their fathers.

Jeremiah's Mission Call

The magnitude of Jeremiah's assignment answers the questions proposed in this study regarding the ability of teenagers and young adults to answer God's call into vocational ministry, which aligns the church with the mission call that assures the continuum of Christ's church for coming generations. Stated in the introduction, obedient youth attempted to lead members of their society back to their rightful place in God's kingdom. In Hebrew the word call, "qara," (*kaw-raw*) means to call out to properly, to address by name."¹⁴ Direct calls often depicted God plans for a major change in the redemptive plan to save humanity from the penalty of sin through faith and obedience of those called to dispense God's word. It exemplifies the love, compassion, sovereignty, and power of the God of all nations.

Jeremiah's first utterance in response to his call, "ah" (*'ahahh*) means, "expressing pain, exclamatorily"¹⁵ He humbly cries out *Ah, Lord God!* indicating that he recognizes the Lord's voice in spite of his youth and with the understanding that his

¹³ Ira M. Price, "The Schools of the Prophets," *The Old Testament Student* 8, no. 7 (March 1889), 248.

¹⁴ James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 125.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

call commands him to minister to the disobedient nation. The Hebrew name for Lord used in this passage is *Adonay* (*ad-o-noy*), “the Lord,” which is used as a proper name for God only.¹⁶

Perhaps the Spirit of God dwelled in him before God formed and birthed into the world, allowing Jeremiah to develop a heart for his people and God throughout his youth. One wonders what thoughts occupied his mind as he observed the actions and false prophecies exhibited by priests and prophets as he grew up in a servant's' house. Did he see the people through the same compassionate eyes of the liberating Moses and Jesus? God, who knew Jeremiah before his presence in the womb reveals the continuing story of the plan of salvation for the Israelites and the world to the young servant. Jeremiah's role in the love story of the plan of salvation for humanity began before creation, orchestrated by the “Ancient of Days” (Daniel 7:9).

His response mirrored that of Moses, *Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak...*¹⁷ John Calvin writes that Moses “was wholly unequal to undertake an office so arduous. Hence, the excuse that is added is that of modesty?”¹⁸ Cognizant of his age and the depth of his call, Jeremiah's response prepared him to become the representative of the divine majesty and the vehicle of divine strength. Perhaps the years leading to Jeremiah's call were an incubation period, wherein God allowed him to observe and take to heart the

¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁷ Exodus 4:10.

¹⁸ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Prophet Jeremiah*, Vol. 1, Ages Digital Commentary, CD-ROM, (Albany, OR: Ages Digital Library, 1998).

condition of his people and other nations. This incubation period possibly prepared and protected Jeremiah from turning away from God and joining the forces, which caused his people, Judah, to seek and worship other Gods.

Jeremiah's response is also reflective of the attitudes of many adult church members who feel teenagers and young adults are too immature and inexperienced to receive a call into vocational ministry. Teenagers are stifled in their call to ministry because of their insecurity and lack of support from the church. They need the discernment of godly believers to model God's response to Jeremiah.

Rebuking Jeremiah, God tells him not to say that he is a child. Jeremiah responds, *I am a child*. In Hebrew the word child, “*na`ar*”, (*nah'-ar*) means a boy.¹⁹ Although Scripture does not indicate Jeremiah's age, James P. Hyatt suggests that he would have been seventeen or eighteen at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign in 609 B.C.²⁰ Age is irrelevant, God called a young servant who with faith accomplished his assignment. God proceeds by telling Jeremiah that he will go and speak what God commanded of him to urge Judah to repent and to deliver the word of the Lord to other nations.

The word “obey” and its derivatives; obedience and obedient is *shama`* (*shaw-mah*) means to “hear” which is defined as to declare, witness and consent in Hebrew.²¹ This implies that hearing means obeying and complying to instructions or commands set forth by God. Renn suggests that in humankind's relationship to God, blessings, and

¹⁹ Strong, *Concordance*, 95.

²⁰ James P. Hyatt, “Jeremiah,” in *Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Song of Songs*, vol. 5 of *The Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, edited by George Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1978), 779.

²¹ Strong, *Concordance*, 761.

curses are associated with obedience. God extends “threats of punishment” when disobedience prevails on individual and on national levels as noted in Jeremiah 12:17, *But if they do not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, said the Lord.* Other nations are to learn the ways of Israel so that they are to be built up in the midst of God’s people.

Jeremiah existed in an environment that did not live up to God’s command to teach the Law to the generations to come.²² Jeremiah’s youthful temple experience serves as a precursor to Jesus twelve-year old presence among them, surrounded by older, more experienced servants who lacked the spiritual ears and hearts to acknowledge the conditions of their society set an example of the spiritual capabilities of youth in today’s society. The entrenchment of the adult leaders in worldly pleasures and religious traditions was so great that God could not use them as messengers to their people or other nations. In the midst of their respective temples, Jeremiah and Jesus spoke God truths as change agents that lead the way for the actualization of God’s everlasting plan of salvation for humanity.

Israel’s acceptance of the worldview of moral values, life styles, and religious complacency is reflective of the church today. Benjamin Stephens and Ralph Watkins state that young adults “want something they can hold on to...not merely a foundation of religious tradition.”²³ Youth’s awareness of the pulse of society can contribute to the church’s strategy for combating Satan’s antics to destroy the church through

²² Ps. 78:5-8.

²³ Benjamin Stephens III and Ralph Watkins, *From Jay-Z to Jesus*, 17.

contemporary societal idols hinder the church from successfully completing Christ's command. The results deeply affects the spirituality of the church as it is void of necessary awareness and understanding of its contextual environment and spiritual needs of all members of the church.

The world's ideology of social correctness often conflicts with the word of God. It is the intention of God that the word goes forth in truth and faith. One can see that God is rising up teenagers at New Faith who will be instrumental in refocusing the church universal. Similar in nature to the Israelite's call, God calls them to serve as the conduit by which the Word becomes known throughout the world. God's time, actions, and purpose work through people to assure that the word goes forth to redeem humanity back to it rightful relationship with the Creator and youth are pivotal conduits of the plan.

Walter Brueggemann states, "Jeremiah is articulated for us as overwhelmingly God's man."²⁴ Jeremiah did not consistently agree with God's plan, even though he proved himself an obedient young prophet, he did not always agree with God's plan. Jeremiah never questioned God's sovereign authority. Jeremiah loved Israel and often pleaded for God's mercy for his people. In spite of his nation's disobedience, Jeremiah, modeling God, had compassion for Israel. He was sincere about getting Israel to return to God to avoid the destruction of Jerusalem and the Nation's final exile.

God developed the redemptive plan that required Israel to "function on behalf of the kingdom of God in the mediatorial [sic] role in relation to the nations."²⁵ The God

²⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Like Fire in the Bones: Listening for the Prophetic Word in Jeremiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 4.

²⁵ Ibid.

who extended grace, mercy and exemplified the utmost love and compassion through Divine power delivered the nation from their oppressive existence in Egypt. God called the oppressed nation to abandon the pagan gods of their oppressors and to honor their deliverer through love and obedience as ministers to other nations needing redeeming.

Brueggemann continues by stating that Jeremiah's "discernment of his historical moment under the rule of YHWH caused him to dismiss in judgment much that was valued and to discern in the hope of possibilities where his contemporaries had none."²⁶ Jeremiah fully understood that God's word was truth and it commanded him to obey every word given to him in order for the Israelites to receive another opportunity to repent and return to their deliver. Their disobedience caused God to implement a plan Jeremiah obeyed and implemented with much pain and suffering. It required him to obey by rooting out and pulling down the nation of chosen people in order for them and other nations to know and turn to God.

The false prophets continuously urged the people not to listen to Jeremiah's messages from God. Their false security, lead them to believe that God would not destroy the temple and exile the people to Babylonia. God informs Jeremiah that he would *pull down and destroy, throw down, to build and to plant* (Jer. 1:2). God knew that Jeremiah would remain faithful to God's call on his life. Jeremiah's obedience afforded him the opportunity to prepare the world for the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Jeremiah's relationship with God is reflected by his stating to God, *behold I cannot speak*. The Hebrew word for cannot is *loh* (*lo*; or "loh)", meaning not and without."²⁷

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Strong, *Concordance*, 35.

John W. Carter states, “When Jeremiah looked at himself, he did not see an image as the personage of a prophet.”²⁸ He had a humble spirit towards God’s authority. He recognized that the role of a prophet is to deliver messages from God to the people. “It is probable that he came to know in his childhood the written messages of former prophets, particularly Hosea.”²⁹ Jeremiah’s spirit was open to God’s messages to the Nation of Israel.

It is likely that Jeremiah heard the truth in Hosea’s messages and discerned them from that of the false priests. “Jeremiah’s early messages reflected a deep influence of Hosea’s thought.”³⁰ God prepares those called to ministry through the writings and teachings of historical witnesses. The writings of other prophets served as a guide for Jeremiah to help shape his thoughts about God and the disobedient condition of Israel. Hosea had warned Israel against its harlotry in both religious and political aspects.³¹ However, the nation chosen to make God known to the world ignored his messages, contributing to Jerusalem’s destruction and pagan nations’ failure to become members of God’s kingdom.

Regardless of his age, Jeremiah understood the responsibilities of a godly prophet’s messages to spiritual leaders who failed to follow God’s commands and

²⁸ John W. Carter, “Jeremiah 1:1-19: The Surety of God’s Calling,” in *The Disciple’s Bible Commentary* (American Journal of Biblical Theology, 2000-2014, Accessed October 12, 2012, http://www.biblicaltheology.com/jer/24_00_00.html).

²⁹ Hyatt, “Jeremiah,” 779.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament*, 442.

ordinances. This showed a contrast between the youthful Jeremiah and the priests and prophets of the day. God tells Jeremiah that, *I have put my words in thy mouth* (Jer. 1:9).

The Hebrew word for put” is *nathan*, *naw-than'*; a primitive root; to give.³²

Theologically, Jeremiah’s call was a movement orchestrated by God toward fulfilling the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, that *all families on earth be blessed*. God guarantees the promise by telling Jeremiah that, *whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak*. (Jer. 1:7c).

The praxis of God’s call for service requires immediate action requiring Jeremiah to move forward while learning how to fulfill his assignment. The temple sermon recorded in Jeremiah 7:1-10:25 was Jeremiah’s first public sermon.³³ One could conclude that Jeremiah delivered the sermon while in his youth. The message coming forth out of Jeremiah’s mouth denounced the disenfranchisement and marginalization of the common people by ungodly political leadership. It epitomizes God’s power in calling inexperienced and chronologically immature teenagers. Jeremiah instructed King Jehoiakim and his constituents to change their lives, treat people fairly, and obey their God’s commands. Compliance would save the nation from impending destruction and restore their commission to introduce the world to their God.

Jeremiah’s first sermon was so powerful that it infuriated King Jehoiakim. Brueggemann writes, “All the energy of the king was devoted to stopping and silencing the dangerous text.”³⁴ Apparently, King Jehoiakim believed burning the scroll would

³² Strong, *Concordance*, 142.

³³ Feinberg, *Jeremiah*, 427.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

silence God's word. Perhaps he thought the word had lost its power because of the idolatry and transgressions of the priests and prophets. Walking in the assurance of God's word, Jeremiah had another one written. Jeremiah's posture reflects his humbleness of dependency, understanding God's plan for humanity and commitment to righteousness. Brueggemann sums up Jeremiah as a servant of God by stating, "Jeremiah is seen as one who speaks the truth into a world of falsehoods and self deception."³⁵ Called, anointed, appointed, and equipped, Jeremiah successfully completes his assignment to become one of the God most faithful servants.

God dispatched Jeremiah directly to minister to other nation when the chosen people failed their mission call. God never doubted his ability to hold such a high position in the redemptive plan of the Creator. The priestly vocation called by God to teach the word continued to defile the temple with idolatry and lead the common people astray with false teaching that claimed God's wrath would not fall on the nation regardless of their disobedience.

The New Testament

Let no man [woman] despise thy youth. 1 Tim. 4:12.

The training of Timothy by Paul is a foundational office of the church for the training of leaders within the body of Christ. This ministry of the church is discussed in the next section of the biblical foundations, the New Testament.

³⁵ Ibid.

The Creator's paradigm of calling, preparing and assigning youth continues in the New Testament. A teenage virgin, Mary, God calls her to be Godbearer.³⁶ Her Son, Jesus, sent by God from heaven in the form of a human infant to be prepared to become the King of Kings, the Liberating Savior and Master teacher and the Master build of God's church. Samuel's ministry was for the Israelites, Jesus ministered to both Jews and Gentiles who carried the Word throughout the world as commissioned in Matthew 28 by continuing the church for future generations.

The New Testament records Timothy's efforts to preach and teach the gospel in a society where many congregations were taught false doctrines. Similar to the idolatrous posture and depravity of the false prophets and priests in the Old Testament with whom Jeremiah spoke against, ungodly New Testament church leaders dispensed false doctrines to their congregations. Syncretism, the merging of more than one religious belief into one system,³⁷ flourished within the early church. Gnostics rejected the incarnation of God through Jesus; the death and the resurrection of Christ was a doctrinal concern for the early church leaders.

Timothy was a teenager who resided in Lystra when he first joined Paul.³⁸ His mother, a devout Jew, and grandmother Lois instructed him in the Scriptures (Acts 16:1 and 2 Tim. 1:5, 14). Timothy's father was a Greek. Even though his mother was a Jew, he was considered a Greek because of his father's nationality. Paul considered Timothy to be a person capable of spreading the gospel within his own culture, namely Jews living in

³⁶ Dean and Foster, *The Godbearing Life*, 27.

³⁷ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey*, 268.

³⁸ Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *Introduction to 1, 2 Timothy; Titus- The Pastoral Letters* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), Exported from Logos Bible Software, November 17, 2012.

Asia Minor, the provinces stretching from the Euphrates to the Ionian Sea where Paul ministered to the early church. Showing his willingness to give himself to the common good, Timothy was circumcised so that he could win those *under the law* (Phil. 2:22). Timothy understood Jesus' compassion for all as He gave His life to save humanity from the penalty of sin through faith. It is obvious that the church elders, who laid hands on Timothy, disregarded his chronological age and discerned his spiritual maturity, wisdom, and discernment for increasing the kingdom.

Paul writes to Timothy guiding, equipping, and, teaching him in his role as a leader in the church of Ephesus to, *Let no man despise thy youth*. In Greek, the word man is “‘*may-dice*’; *I* (man, woman, thing)”. In Greek despise is “‘*kat-af-ron-eh*’-o’; (think against, i.e. disesteem).”³⁹ The praxis for Timothy’s development as a leader of the church allows him to utilize his spiritual gifts as he grows and learns how to lead the church within a pagan society full of false doctrines. Paul’s message to his co-servant is from one generation to another, “an older friend addressing a younger.”⁴⁰ Paul recognized the difficulty Timothy would encounter in ministry. In discerning Timothy’s call and the confirmation by the laying of hands on him indicates that Paul recognized Timothy’s character.

³⁹ Strong, *Concordance*, 264.

⁴⁰ James Phillip Hyatt, “1 Timothy,” in *1 & 2 Timothy*, vol. 9 of *The Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, ed. Leaner E. Leak (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998) 378.

Larry Richards states, “Within the faith, false teachers intruded, infiltrating twisted doctrine and warped lifestyles.”⁴¹ As a second generation Christian minister, Timothy served as an agent introducing Jesus and His Gospel of salvation to Jews and Gentiles. Called by God, the church elders “laid hands,” ordaining him to lead Christ’s church in his youth. Paul and the elders understood the important praxis of young adults in leadership for growth and stability. Teenagers represent unclogged minds clouded by tradition that can preclude growth and the ability to hear God’s Word for the remediation of social ills in contemporary society. When Biblical truths go forth by godly adult leaders, the vigor and youthful minds accommodated the necessities for the growth of God’s kingdom. A by-product of such includes the youth’s ability to evangelize and guide their unsaved contemporaries into the kingdom. Teenagers follow you each other and bring their children who will insure the continuation of from generation to generation.

Some church leaders and members reference 1 Corinthians 8:1-2 as justification for precluding youth from using their gifts and talents in ministry. John Neufeld writes, “Some feel that the question of vocational ministry is too big, that youth are not ready for it.”⁴² Youth often model what they observe from their leaders. The Scriptural text is a message for all periods of time and all generations. The praxis of seasoned spiritual leadership must be that of modeling continuous spiritual growth and transformation to

⁴¹ Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *Introduction to 1, 2 Timothy; Titus-The Pastoral Letters: The Teacher’s Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), Exported from Logos Bible Software, November 17, 2012.

⁴² John Neufeld, “Rediscovering the Calling and Sending Church,” *Direction: a Mennonite Brethren Forum* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2003) 195, Accessed June 14, 2012, http://www.directionjournal.org/issues/gen/art_1309_.html.

avoid a puffed ego that can affect all age groups. Paul records Jesus' perfect posture regarding this attitude in Philippians

In spite of Timothy's knowledge of scripture, some assumed that people would not listen to or respect him because of his youth. Timothy was capable of leading the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit with help from a seasoned leader. Paul did not want Timothy to buckle under the pressures of his position and the ridicule of others. Timothy needed reminding of his purpose and the protection of the one who called him to service, God. Timothy was somewhat retiring and perhaps a bit shy and appeared to be sincerely devoted to the faith. Richards and Richards suggest that, occasionally, Timothy was anxious about his opponents of the Gospel and concerns within the Corinthian church.⁴³

In his commentary, Luke Timothy Johnson correlates 1 Timothy 4:12, *Let no man despise your youth*, with 1 Corinthians 16:10-11, *see that he may work without fear ... let no man thou despise him*. Paul longed for Timothy to approach the Corinthian community "without fear," (*aphobos*).⁴⁴ Johnson suggests that Paul discerned possible (*deilia*) cowardice in Timothy. Paul's tutorage of Timothy reflects the importance of "mature, godly guidance"⁴⁵ for youth called into ministry. Paul gives Timothy the guidance he needs and instructs the Corinthian church to support him. Timothy's fears

⁴³ Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards. *Introduction to 1, 2 Timothy; Titus-The Pastoral Letters: The Teacher's Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), Exported from Logos Bible Software, November 17, 2012.

⁴⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, "The First and Second Letters to Timothy," in *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 413.

⁴⁵ Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *Josh McDowell's Handbook on Counseling Youth*, 503.

may have been caused by his age, their lack of experience and knowledge, or a lack of acceptance and validation from church leaders or other members of their support system.

Dean and Foster state, “Paul sees Timothy as an agent of mission, a young man transformed by the gospel who can convey transforming good news to others.”⁴⁶ Robert Dabney suggests that God works through the Holy Spirit in individuals called by enlightening and influencing their conscience and understanding of their call.⁴⁷ “It is important that his Christian brethren understand the Bible truths and the circumstances and qualifications in himself which reasonably point out preaching God’s word. The full and certainties of a call to the ministry is uttered by the Holy Spirit, both to the candidate themselves and to the church. “⁴⁸

The Holy Spirit speaks to members of the church to guide and pray along side the individual who is discerning a call. A call into vocational ministry is often stressful and agonizing for some people. The support of enlightened members is instrumental in helping the one called through the process of recognizing and accepting the call. Dean and Foster states, “Significant relationships with other Christians matter because they teach us about something about what God is like.”⁴⁹ The same formative relationship fosters love and support for youth discerning a career in vocational ministry.

Paul encourages Timothy, reminding him that his gifts were given through prophecy when the elders laid hands on you.”⁵⁰ *Regardless of what people might have*

⁴⁶ Dean and Foster, *The Godbearing Life*, 28.

⁴⁷ Robert Dabney, “Systematic Theologies,” *Discussions on Theology*, CD-ROM (Albany, OR: Ages Digital Library, 2007).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Dean and Foster, *The Godbearing Life*, 29.

said, *Paul assures Timothy that God called him.* Therefore, Timothy is not to neglect his gifts given by God through the Holy Spirit because neglecting his gifts would work against the purpose of Jesus' ministry on earth.

"Paul desired this young man's involvement in the church as an instrument of mission, a useful tool for promoting the gospel."⁵¹ Paul sets an example for church leaders; he shows how they should have a desire for youth to be instrumental in the mission of the church. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel and wanted everyone to hear and believe in the WORD. Paul's heart was in his vocational ministry which under girded his success, teaching and preaching in faith and truth unto the ends of the earth. In the first letter to the Corinthian church, his love for the Word and members of the kingdom is exemplified, *I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus.* (1 Cor. 1:4) Paul's letters to the churches reflect his zeal for promoting the purpose, love, and gift of the Word. Training others for the church's mission was imperative; he realized he could not do it alone.

The call of the young virgin, Mary, to be the "Godbearer" announced the coming of the new covenant between God and humanity in the continuing love story leading to the actualization of the plan of salvation. Dean and Foster states "God has no qualm about making the most profound request in human history to a teenager."⁵² It is the

⁵⁰ 1 Tim. 4:14.

⁵¹ Dean and Foster, *The Godbearing Life*, 28.

⁵² Ibid., 49.

ultimate example of God's confidence and use of teenagers for the plan of redemption. God has announced miracle pregnancies and births to aged women such as Sara and Elizabeth as examples. A teenage girl would birth the long awaited King and Savior.

Kenda and Foster suggest, "something revolutionary happened when God asked a *teenager* to bring *salvation* into the world."⁵³ A single girl in the midst of a society against her is a key concern. Yet she showed maturity as she answered, *I am the Lord's servant ... May it be as you said* (Luke 1:38). Through her fear, she recognized her call, to be the Godbearer. God sent Gabriel to announce to Mary that she was *highly favored!* *The Lord is with you* (Luke 1:28). Gabriel shares God's compassion and confidence in her. Like young Jeremiah and Samuel, God calls Mary into a vocation of her own. To be highly favored by the Lord speaks volumes on how God regards youth, character, purity, and humility over age. Dean and Foster suggest that her identity had not been established, which made her a perfect candidate for helping God save the world.⁵⁴

This is God in all of the divine sovereign's power to choose a poor teenager to bear the Son of God. The Creator shows Mary favor and selects her to bear the Savior of the world. She is the only person, a teenager, on earth who could say that her child will become her savior and savior to all who would believe in Him. The "least among you" is called to bear God's ultimate gift to the world. Showing her fear, Gabriel reassures her, *Do not be afraid, you have found favor with God* (Luke 1:30). She is told, not asked that she will be with child and give birth to a son. God called her to be the mother of the long awaited Savior, God's ultimate plan of salvation for humanity.

⁵³ Ibid., 48.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 46.

God called Mary to become the bearer and mother of the seed that would *bruise his head*.⁵⁵ Through an act of God, the Holy Spirit came upon the young virgin and she conceived God's Son, Jesus, without human intervention or her permission. She had only to accept the call on her life as God's truth as evidenced in the fruit the young virgin bore. His name is Jesus who would become the Jesus Christ, the risen One.⁵⁶

Jesus: Master Teacher

New Testament definition for rabbi is "*rab-bee*, my master and "an official title of honor"⁵⁷ The term rabbi did not necessarily refer to a specific office or occupation. In the time of Jesus, rabbi acknowledged "those who excelled in the Law of Moses and were qualified to teach it."⁵⁸ Jesus exemplified the manifestation of the Law throughout Scripture. He was God incarnate, the Master Teacher who fully understood that the law could not save humanity from the penalty of sin.

Walter Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough states, "Jesus' whole public ministry was directed toward instructing the people."⁵⁹ Jesus taught the gospel of the kingdom of God directly to members of His society and to the disciples. He announced His platform to the masses as humanity's Redeemer in Matthew 5:3-10. Millard Richardson adds, "Jesus'

⁵⁵ Gen. 4:15.

⁵⁶ Luke 1:32.

⁵⁷ Strong, *Concordance*, 78.

⁵⁸ Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2008), 402.

⁵⁹ Ibid. *Encountering*, 83.

teaching included a great deal about the poor and poverty.”⁶⁰ Matthew 5:3-10 exhibits Jesus’ compassion and favor for the disenfranchised and marginalized members of society.

Blessings are extended to the poor in spirit; mourners; meek; those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful and peacemakers. Jesus’ promises of love and compassion are clothed in His righteousness, grace, and mercy for humanity. The omnipotence and omniscience of the Creator God commissioned Jesus to take on human form and model righteousness for humanity while preparing to redeem back to God that which Satan stole in the Garden of Eden.

Jesus did not enter the world as the Savior, Master and, Teacher. He *increased in wisdom and stature, in favour with God and man.*⁶¹ into His unequaled ministry. Luke’s account of Jesus’ adolescent excursion away from His parents after the Passover feast denotes the inherent posture of adolescent behavior. After searching three days, they found Him in the temple sitting among the doctors, (“*did-as’-kal-os*”), Greek meaning instructor, master or teacher.”⁶²

The adolescent Jesus asked questions of the doctors who were amazed at the depth of His understanding. God equipped Him with the level of intellect needed to understand the dialogue and teachings of the doctors. Richard L. Niswonger states that Jesus exhibited interest learning Judaic traditions and laws.”⁶³ God’s imputation of an

⁶⁰ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 1998), 567.

⁶¹ Luke 2:52.

⁶² Strong, *Concordance*, 23.

⁶³ Richard L. Niswonger, *New Testament History*, 127.

inquisitive nature and self-humility within Jesus serves to display His desire to seek truths for His assignment of redeeming human humanity back to the Creator.

Niswonger explains that Jesus “had a sense of his mission and relationship with God.”⁶⁴ This is a powerful statement denoting that in Jesus’ humanity, a typical adolescent, yet aware of God’s call on His life to serve in the kingdom. He was not a deity, but rather a young boy recognizing His purpose in life and eager to walk in His pre-ordained mission call to serve humanity. Niswonger continues his discussion regarding Jesus’ youth suggesting that it is probable that Jesus learned the oral traditions of Judaism in His youth since the “Pharisaic influences pervaded Galilee during this time in history.”⁶⁵

The Pharisaic influences became more prevalent as Jesus’ ministry developed in Galilee and other areas where Jesus taught. The Pharisees committed themselves to maintaining and preserving the Judaic laws and religious traditions by God given through Moses to the Israelites. Jesus threatened their religious belief system, causing the Pharisees to reject Jesus’ teachings.

Jesus’ act of becoming subject to His parents (Luke 2:51) demonstrates appropriate adolescent behavior that serves as the prerequisite for an obedient posture for the kingdom of God as the Redeemer for humanity. Wayne Grudem suggests that Jesus “went through the same learning process just like all other children do.”⁶⁶ This process

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 533.

may have been more difficult for Jesus because he did not have family and peers who were experiencing His distinct extensive spiritual growth. Grudem adds, “This ordinary learning process was part of the genuine humanity of Christ.”⁶⁷

Learning to become the Savior through everyday experiences, studying the Scriptures, questioning and listening to the doctors facilitated Jesus’ spiritual and cognitive acquisition of knowledge as God prepared Him to fulfill plan of salvation for humanity.

Grudem explains that Jesus “Took on human form to be “our example and pattern for life.”⁶⁸ His humanity facilitated the foundation for teaching the disciples how to disciple others. It prepared them for implementing the Great Commission to *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations*⁶⁹ Jesus’ humanity augmented His ability to reach the hearts of those He taught. His compassion for children served as a teaching tool for the disciples. Calling and placing a child among them demonstrated the humbleness required of His students,⁷⁰ the message emphasized a teachable spirit, open hearts, and compassion for all members of society.

Otis and Frank Cary suggest that Jesus’ disciples were teenagers and young adults.⁷¹ They believe several scriptures point to Jesus calling youth to discipleship. In John 13:33, the disciples were addressed as “little children,” the Greek term for *tek-nee*’-

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 541.

⁶⁹ Matt. 28:19.

⁷⁰ Matt. 18:2.

⁷¹ Otis Cary and Frank Cary, “How Old were Christ’s Disciples?” *The Biblical World* 50, no. 1 (July 1917), Accessed April 7, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3136128>.

on; is an *infant*⁷² and Mark 15:40, “James the Less.” The Greek term for less is *mik-ros*, means, small, little,⁷³ infers youth. The premise that Jesus called youth to train as servants for the kingdom parallels Samuel and his School of the prophets who were trained to minister throughout Israel. God threads the plan for all of humanity’s salvation throughout the Old and New Testaments. The Creator repeats this method of assuring the world comes to know the plan of salvation through Jesus’ ministry. The effort of the prophets to enlighten the Israelites intellectually and spiritually served to make God known to other nations. Jesus’ called the young disciples to teach all nations in the same likeness of Old Testament, Jeremiah and the Master Teacher, Jesus whom God knew would fulfill their respective sacrificial assignments on earth.

Otis and Frank Cary assert that, with the exception of Peter, Jesus’ disciples were less than twenty years old.⁷⁴ The Jewish historical educational system under girds in Jewish society found in the Mishnah, the first written recording of the Oral Torah of the Jewish people.⁷⁵ Boys six or seven attended schools in the cities; sixteen and seventeen year-old youth who were capable of providing for themselves away from home, attended school in the “district schools.”⁷⁶

⁷² Strong, *Concordance*, 89.

⁷³ Ibid., 58.

⁷⁴ Otis Cary and Frank Cary, “How Old were Christ’s Disciples?” *The Biblical World* 50, no. 1 (July 1917), Accessed April 7, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3136128>.

⁷⁵ “Mishnah: a Description of Judaism’s Primary Book of Jewish Legal Theory,” *My Jewish Learning*, Accessed July 7, 2014, <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/Mishnahs.html>.

⁷⁶ Otis Cary and Frank Cary, “How Old were Christ’s Disciples?” *The Biblical World* 50, no. 1 (July 1917), Accessed April 7, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3136128>.

At fifteen years, studying the Talmud was the educational focus; marriage was the focus at eighteen and at the age of twenty, the “pursuit of business”⁷⁷ Clark contends that Peter was the only disciple mentioned in scripture with a wife possibly making him the elder of the group. Otis and Frank also assert that Jesus refers to the disciples when he says, “little children” in John 13:33 and “Children, have you caught any fish yet?” in John 21:15. This indicates that Jesus called teenagers and young adults to train as His disciples to spread the Gospel to the Jews and Gentiles. The trajectory of this theology exemplifies God’s continuous paradigm of calling youth with willing hearts into vocational ministry to spread the redeeming grace of the Word until Christ returns for His church.

The disciple’s adolescent behavior is another rationalization Otis and Frank uses to support their theory.⁷⁸ Referencing Luke 9:46, they state, “young people would be more likely than older ones to have an open quarrel over seats at the table, adults, while as eager to have the best place, being more likely to seek it in ways not making such an evident display of selfishness.” The writer understands their premise to imply that the disciple’s psychological and social maturity exhibited that of developing adolescents. Jesus understood the disciple’s posture, for He experienced growth in wisdom.

The next chapter discusses the historical preparatory practices utilized by Christ’s church and para-church organizations designed to ensure the continuation of God’s kingdom for coming generations.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Biblical foundations established God's paradigm of calling youth in scripture to serve as conduits for dispensing the news of the plan of salvation from the penalty of sin for humanity. It reveals that youth called to serve have executed massive and pertinent tasks, ushering in new seasons in God's plan for the kingdom. God provided each youth with the necessary gift and guidance needed to fulfill God's will for their life and the kingdom.

Chapter One, established that God's pathos for humanity is everlasting; it is clear that calls for youth will continue from generation to generation throughout the ages. This chapter, Historical Foundations, threads God's continuous paradigm of calling and equipping youth into vocational ministry throughout the history of the church. God gives assignments to youth that meets the needs of the context in which the young servants reside throughout the centuries. Systems of training and preparation varied from formal to informal within seasons and cultures. Scholarly literature reveals that traditionally throughout the centuries ministerial training was limited to young men. The exclusion of teenage and young adult females remains the norm for many congregations today.

The recorded history of ministerial training in the church begins in the second century. Harold H. Rowdon asserts that early writings, such as the *Didache* and the

Shepherd of Hermas, for example, suggest, “that the charismatic nature of the early ministry of the apostles, prophets, and teachers hardly called for formal training.”¹ Often called the Apostolic Age, the early church leaders of this period were students of those who had walked with Jesus and His followers. Rowdon suggests that charismatic gifts of group leaders outlasted the Apostolic Age² and extended into the early second century. The writer contends that the anointing of the early Christian leaders was so potent that charismatic gifts which flowed to the next generation of followers was an act of God which assured the continuum of Christianity in the pagan Hellenic society.

Rowdon continues his discussion by asserting that the introduction of the monepiscopacy, [church government by monarchical bishops] in the early second century possibly had substantial repercussion for ministerial training.³ The equipping of the young clergy was the responsibility of the bishop who governed the church and its staff. Whether formal or informal, the method of selection and instruction for clergy changed over time.

Glen L. Thompson asserts that second century elders of the local church and provincial bishops received their training from itinerate preachers. Often gifted young males served as pastoral apprentices as they studied at the feet of the itinerant preachers

¹ Harold H. Rowdon, “*Theological Education in Historical Perspective*,” *Vox Evangelica* 7 (1971): 75-87, Accessed November 12, 2013, http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/vox/vol07/education_rowdon.pdf.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

alongside the elders of the church.⁴ The praxis of including young trainees provided the opportunity for mentorship between church elders and young servants modeled, by Jesus and His disciples.

Hellenism began to affect and influence the church's concept of clergy and education.⁵ This was not a new concept in the early church. Paul instructed Timothy in 1 Tim. 1:18-20 to fight heresy and to fight it well. The effort became more cumbersome during the second and third centuries as the church became less Jewish. As Athens and Tarsus became the primary destinations for wealthy young men seeking to study with philosophers.

The Graeco-Roman philosophers did not possess the gift of discerning the scriptures and often mixed pagan philosophy and knowledge with biblical doctrines, resulting in a form of syncretism. Of equal importance, pagan religion, which was the choice of the Graeco-Roman philosophers, did not offer students any "moral instruction to be inculcated into its adherents."⁶ Christian instruction is founded on spiritual doctrines outlined by Jesus and His disciples, which are to be lived out daily. Constant reminders of the way of the Lord were a technique employed by Godly elders of the church.

The similarities between Christian preachers, teachers, and pagan philosophers became apparent, as Christianity became the religion for others in the multicultural

⁴ Glen L. Thompson, "Teaching The Teachers: Pastoral Education In The Early Church," *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary File*, Accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/ThompsonTeaching.pdf>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

society. Thompson recounts satirist Lucian's parody "The Passing of Peregrinus," which depicts the story of how the charlatan Peregrinus "used knowledge obtained from a Christian priest and scribes to become a prophet, cult-leader...synagogue leader and everything all by himself."⁷ The character exemplified the disregard for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the sovereignty of God of the period. Graeco-Roman society was filled with pagan philosophers who considered Christianity to be another form of philosophy. Ironically, Peregrinus Christian followers visited him in jail.⁸ This is reflective of the disregard and lack of understanding of Christian doctrines and biblical truths of some believers.

Eventually, heresies such as docetism, gnosticism and Marcionism, arose developing a need for the church to train qualified teachers to counter the false teachings.⁹ The absence of Biblical truths inhibited the teachings of Jesus Christ to go forth in truth effecting unbelievers' ability to misunderstand God's effectual call into the kingdom.

Origen, (184-254), an African from Alexandria, Egypt (the intellectual center of the Graeco-Roman Empire) answered the call and began his career in ministry at eighteen. Origen became head of the Catechetical School in Alexandria, which was the first Christian institution of higher education. The institution was "a center of study based

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

on allegorical interpretation of the bible... and Christian belief.”¹⁰ The ability of Origen to comprehend the Word of God and teach teachers surely was an act of God. The implications strongly illuminate the creator’s omniscience, which is forever present. The gifting of the young Origen served God’s plan of salvation through his writings, which included the *First Principles*, *Origen on Prayer*, *Commentaries on the Books of John and Matthew*. Origen’s writings serve to add cohesiveness and understanding of the Word for church leaders who God called to fight the heresies attacking the church. God endowed and empowered him at an early age with the ability to articulate in written form what he sincerely believed to be Biblical truths for kingdom building.

Paul Johnson states that Origen “offered the world the first theory of knowledge conceived entirely from within Christian assumptions, he ... dismissed the Greek philosophers as false and constructed a new synthesis out of profane and sacred knowledge.”¹¹ The church leaders struggled to maintain biblical truths as the foundation for teaching the saints as well as leading the unsaved to Christ.

Origen studied under the Church of Rome’s elder, Hippolytus, in Athens, Asia Minor and in Palestine. Provincial bishops extended invitations to Origen to give public lectures on biblical exegesis to the church.¹² It is apparent that only wealthy young men

¹⁰ Alistair Body-Evans, “Catechetical School of Alexandria,” *About Education*, Accessed July 15, 2012, <http://africanhistory.about.com/od/religionmythswitchcraft/g/def-Catechetical-School-of-Alexandria.html>.

¹¹ Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976), 58-59.

¹² Glen L. Thompson, “Teaching The Teachers: Pastoral Education In The Early Church” *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary File*, Accessed March 12, 2013, www.wlsessays.net/files/ThompsonTeaching.pdf.

had the privilege of studying with church leaders abroad. God gifted the young Origen, who was not entrenched with the false doctrines of the Graeco-Roman society, to write study guides to explain the Word to church leaders. Frederick Quinn writes in his book *African Saints*, “Like other figures of the North African Church, Origen devoted a considerable amount of energy to combat heresies.”¹³ Origen’s mission resembles that of Jeremiah and Timothy diligently working to assure that Jesus’ teaching went forth into the world accurately with nothing added or deleted. Quinn adds that Origen “was less concerned about history and context” but rather that “seeing all Scripture pointing to Christ the Son of God as redeemer of fallen humanity.”¹⁴

Prior to the fourth century, preparation for the priesthood was personal and practical. Boys and young men began by assisting the bishop and priests with the ministry of the church. Gradually, through active participation, they learned how to interpret, explain scripture, and prepare converts for baptism.

The fourth century ushered in the first systematic program for young boys and men who volunteered as acolytes or other entry-level church offices.¹⁵ Research of this period does not mention a call into vocational ministry. A youth selected by church

¹³ Frederick Quinn, *African Saints* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002), 158.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Glen L. Thompson, “Teaching The Teachers: Pastoral Education In The Early Church” from *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary File*, Accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/ThompsonTeaching.pdf>.

leadership advanced to a higher position, according to his or her skills and abilities. The movement was from “lector to exorcist, sub-deacon, deacon, presbyter, bishop, or archbishop.”¹⁶

The training required discernment and mentoring in order for the youth to understand the spiritual responsibilities of each office. Spiritual formation would be an essential guidance and training area for the youth whose office required service to the young and old congregants of the church. According to Thompson, an effort was made to “assure the spiritual and physical maturity of church office-holders... The Council of Neo-Caesarea (held between 314 and 319 AD) limited the minimum age for presbyteries to thirty.”¹⁷ The age and lengths of training for each office fluctuated during the period, reflecting the ideology of Jerome and Sylvester. The inadequate supply of young men willing to enter vocational ministry resulted in Zosimus reducing the age requirements for clerics to twenty-one. These policies securely placed the responsibility of equipping the clergy with the church leaders.

During the fourth century, St. Ambrose instructed St. Augustine of Hippo who also instructed many young clerics in the church. St Ambrose’s instructions included teaching the Creed line-by-line-truth, the nature of the Trinity, Hebrew Scriptures, and “moral education.”¹⁸ After the Council of Trent, catechists began to teach members of the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Anthony Viéban, "Ecclesiastical Seminary," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), Accessed September 10, 2014, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13694a.htm>.

church how to instruct others in baptism and other forms of religious education. Youth and children were to be of most importance because it would grow the church. Catechesis means “oral teaching,” which was the chosen method of teaching children and youth in the early church. The lack of training provided a platform for false doctrines to inundate the society without the biblically knowledgeable people to counter such fallacies. The Council recognized the spiritual needs of the children and their call to assure the continuum of the growth of God’s church for coming generations.

Monastic communities served as the primary centers for cleric training during the fifth and sixth centuries. The church faced new issues that appeared in society, the wave of barbaric invaders: Franks, Goths, Vandals, Saxon, and Jutes infiltrating the area. The dominance of Islam in the Near East, North African, and Spain was a major concern for the church because of its status as the official religion of the Roman Empire. In the late fourth century, under Emperor Theodosius, “Christian uniformity became the official policy of the Empire.”¹⁹ Invasions of the barbaric pagan entities and Islam would threaten the sovereignty of the church. The pagans residing in the empire gladly joined forces with the evaders to dismantle the church.

Rowdon reports that “the sixth century council, Vaison (529) ...advised every monastic priest to take a child under his care, teach him the Psalter, liturgical rites and Christian morals... in short, to put him in the way to succeed him”²⁰ The church wanted

¹⁹ Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 58-59.

²⁰ Harold, H. Rowdon, “Theological Education in Historical Perspective,” *Vox Evangelica* 7 (1971), Accessed November 12, 2013, http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/vox/vo_l07/education_rowdon.pdf.

to convert the invaders to Christianity and increased its efforts in preparing youth for ministry. God's service requires the church to use a holistic methodology in for training individuals for service.

The Church encountered a resurgence of the difficulty of society distinguishing between the secular and sacred. Rowdon states, that Europe superficially appeared to be Christianized [sic] on the surface, with the Pope and Emperor jointly assuming responsibility for church and state. Apparently, boundaries defining the appropriate relationship between the two were beyond their grasp.²¹ Political motivations generally under gird the posture and stance of heads of state. As stated earlier, the Church's focus was primarily building God's kingdom on earth. The writer contends that a contributing factor to the confusion between sacred and secular stemmed from the cruel and harsh methods employed to increase the kingdom. The Church failed to exhibit the praxis of evangelizing and modeling Christ; this stifled the efforts of the Church.

Secular clergy provided the majority of the training for promising young servants. The opportunity to board and study under abbots and bishops was a luxury afforded to wealthy youth.²² New religious orders such as the Friars, Dominicans, and Franciscans became instrumental in combating the heresies of the time. Similar to Samuel's School of the Prophets, the new orders ministered to the needs of the unchurched in the towns and cities.

The inconsistent and substandard training of clergy led to sixth century reformers to criticize the ignorance and ineptitude of the clergy.²³ Designed to remediate the

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

problems, universities became the major source for training clergy. However, the church was not relieved of its duties of disciplining its congregants. The Council of Trent directed all cathedral and greater churches to “maintain, to educate religiously, and to train in ecclesiastical discipline, a certain number of youth of their city and diocese’ or to provide this to be done ‘in a college to be chosen by the bishop for this purpose.’”²⁴

The councils, the governing bodies of the church, recognized the need for equipping youth for their offices in the church. The inconsistencies that dominated the formal and informal training systems limited the success in implementing and providing a continuum of ministry to youth. Individual churches, leaders and dioceses each assisted in the haphazard training of youth contributed to the development of false doctrines and syncretism in societies as people’s hunger for spirituality, a greater power existed.

International Christian organizations evolved out of the concern of private individuals concerned about the spirituality of youth in society. The Lott Carey Calling Congregations designed a program to encourage and welcome adolescents considering a call into vocational ministry. Five congregations in the Washington, DC area provide ministry programs that “[encourage] adolescents to share leadership roles and consider a call to vocational ministry.”²⁵ This partnership allows inner-city churches to network and combine their resources to enhance the level of ministry their youth need to make appropriate career choices for their life and the kingdom.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Calling Congregations Grants Gallery: Participating Congregations and Church-Related Organizations”, Accessed May 8, 2012, http://theoledu.3cdn.net/36e1d2a6591c92b283_7tm6bn0cu.pdf.

The initiative networks with the Lott Carey Foundation, established by Lott Carey, a slave who bought his freedom and became a missionary to African in 1821 serves and trains youth for ministry. He established the first Baptist church in Liberia, Providence Baptist Church.²⁶ Lott Carey's vision and love for his people has provided opportunity legacy for teenagers and young adults in the Washington, DC area, long after his death. The foundation continues the mission work established by Rev. Lott. Youth participating in the program are exposed to overseas mission trips to Africa.²⁷ This exposure enhances student's ability to serve others on the level of adult servants.

A study out of the Lott Carey Foundation show that an issue concerning ministry training programs for teens called into ministry is parental "pushback." Some parents believe that church ministry leaders are "intentionally pushed into preaching or down a path that leads to pastoral ministry."²⁸

The parents prefer that their teens complete college and secure lucrative paying jobs so that they can improve their economic status in life. For these parents, seeking vocational ministry is only acceptable after obtaining a well-paying job.²⁹ Another competing force for youth programs is that of competing with time teens spend with school and special after school activities. Some parents consider the church project as

²⁶ Timeline by 1701-1800 Lott Carey-*Church History*, Accessed July 9, 2013, www.christianity.com >...>Timeline 1701-1800.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "Lott Carey's International Youth Development Department," *Lott Carey*, Accessed March 15, 2013, <http://lottcarey.publishpath.com/youth-development>.

²⁹ Ibid.

competitive against educational and sports rather than an opportunity for their teenagers to be trained and used their gifts for God's kingdom building.

The Salvation Army, Awana, and Young Life, internationally known programs designed to assure the extension of God's kingdom until Christ returns for His church. Sir George Williams of England collaborated with twelve men in 1844 to establish the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). The association's mission entails bringing Christian young men together who, "desire to be disciples of Christ in their, faith life and, "to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom amongst young men."³⁰ The leaders accomplished their efforts of improving the conditions of young using a holistic approach through Bible classes, family, and community prayer meetings and alliances with other agencies.

The global nondenominational youth ministry Awana introduces youth to Christ and equips them youth to extend God's kingdom by leading other youth into the kingdom. The ministry is "committed to the belief that the greatest impact for Christ starts with kids who know, love, and serve Him."³¹ Local churches can benefit by collaborating with programs to enhance and assure their longevity for coming generations. However, it remains the local church's responsibility to prepare teenagers and young adults called into vocational ministry.

³⁰ YMCA Historical Figures-World Alliance of YMCA's, Assessed October 15, 2014, www.ymca.net/history/founding.html.

³¹ Awana.org/what we believe, Accessed October 15, 2014, www.awana.org/what-we-believe.

Historically, vocational ministry training for teenagers and young adults in the African American church experience has not evolved as an essential ministry.

Throughout the Black community, there were churches that discerned and trained selected youth through informal apprenticeship activities. There are many young people throughout the church who are informally mentored by pastors and associate pastors. The Youth share their gifts and talents on youth Sundays and other youth programs. In some situations, teenagers and young adults serve as armor bearers while observing the pastor's service to the congregation and community.

Scholarly literature does not indicate a history of formal vocational ministry training for the African American church. This phenomenon is applicable to adult members of the church as well as youth discerning their call and in need of spiritual guidance. A brief walk through church history tells the story of the need for ministerial training programs for teenagers and young adults within the local church. Heresies continue to invade the life of the Christian community. The onset of technology has opened the door to immediate access to every possible belief that can be contrary to God's Word. The Creator, who foreknew the conditions of every period in the life of the church, prepared young and older adults to serve youth discerning a call into vocational ministry through the assistance of philanthropic organizations, one of which is the Lilly Endowment, Inc.

The purpose of the Lilly Endowment is to fund programs "to encourage youth to "think theologically."³² Fifty-three theological seminaries across the United States

³² "Lilly Endowment funds programs to encourage youth to "think theologically," Press Release, October 18, 2001, *The Lilly Endowment*, Accessed June 17, 2012, [http://www.lillyendowment.org/pdf/TheologicalExofVoc 2001Winners.youth.pdf](http://www.lillyendowment.org/pdf/TheologicalExofVoc%2001Winners.youth.pdf).

shared a total of “\$14.3 million to for developing, maintaining and augmenting their programs for high school students.”³³ The programs vary from weeklong summer activities to the creation of ministry resource centers for youth. Local churches recommend youth for participation in the programs.

The Endowment supports The Fund for Theological Education (FTE), located in Atlanta, GA. FTE supports the efforts of the local church, and church related organizations that prepare young congregants for vocational ministry. Though funding is not limited to teenagers, the focus is to assure the future of the local and church universal according to scripture.

FTE awards grants to diverse denominations and church related organizations within the United States who have demonstrated an ability to work regionally. VocationCARE funds programs allocated for inter-generational communities that engage youth and young adults called to Christian leadership. “VocationCARE is a set of practices designed to help congregations become places where everyone, particularly young people exploring Christian vocation and the call to pastoral ministry-hears and responds to God’s call in their lives.”³⁴

The writer interviewed two churches who received funding from the Fund for Theological Education (FTE), Wilshire Baptist of Dallas, Texas, and Covenant United Church of Christ in South Holland, Illinois. *YourCall*, directed by Darren DeMent, at Wilshire Baptist Church existed prior to FTE’s funding.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *The FTE Guide to VocationCARE* (Atlanta: The Fund for Theological Education, 2012), Accessed June 15, 2012, fteleaders.org/uploads/filesGuide%20to%20vocationCAREPDF.

This is a program of theological discernment for students in grades nine through twelve who are exploring calls to ministry and have shown evidence of related gifts. The goal is to introduce ministry as a viable vocation, guiding gifted young people to a lifetime of service to God by modeling healthy and vibrant ministries and a mentored process of discernment.³⁵

In a telephone conversation with the director, Darren Dement shared the following information: the program currently serves twenty, fifteen-twenty year olds discerning a call to vocational ministry, self-selected teenagers expressing their discernment for a career in vocational ministry with church leadership and their families. Each participant receives the necessary support needed to assist and guide him or her through the ministry program. Students are generally in the program four years through high school. Some remain active throughout the four years without breaks in participation. Those who take breaks or totally leave the program usually do so because of a job situation.³⁶

The church requires the teenagers to remain active members during their participation in the program. Teens read scripture, plan services, among other things; and the program is not considered youth ministry. It is highlighted as a ministry in training program for teenagers designed to prepare them for further study at a Bible school, seminary or divinity school. "The teens are expected to attend mission trips and retreats." Mission trips are required and are a fundamental part of the program.

It is the church's responsibility as commanded by Christ in His Great Commission to teach. Students learn how to respect other people's cultures. They acquire a better understanding of God's love for all peoples. The teens are required to attend church

³⁵ Communities of Call Participants, Accessed June 20, 2012, <http://google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8>.

³⁶ Darren DeMent, phone interview by author, November 16, 2012.

services on a regular basis. This allows students to be active members of the church by sharing their gifts and talents with their church family. It also serves as a practical element in their training for their ministries in adulthood.³⁷ Teens feel connected to churches that recognize and encourage them as members of the church body by allowing each to share their gifts with cross generations. The teenagers receive instruction in theology, church history, biblical interpretation, worship, and liturgy.³⁸ The need for such training is fundamental for assuring that students receive sound instruction in biblical truths.

Journals are kept enabling participants to reflect on their experience and spiritual growth throughout their participation in the program. “All courses focus on God’s call for the teens to serve the kingdom for the continuation of the local and church universal.”³⁹ They understand that God did not intend for them to wait until they became full adults to share their gifts later in life after they are more mature and have established themselves financially. DeMent is in the process of charting the outcomes of the program. He believes he can show that many students have pursued a career in full time vocational ministry. He shared, “that often school jobs and other activities keeps some from continuing the program on a continuous basis.” This phenomenon serves as a standard concern most programs experience throughout the research examined for this ministry study.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

The second church funded by FTE contacted by the researcher was Covenant United Church of Christ, an African American church located in Dalton, Illinois, which is about thirty miles south of Chicago. The former director of Gideon's Army, Rev. Ethel Southern, designed the program for teens in high school. This program seeks to provide a "safe, sacred space"⁴⁰ for teens to engage vocational discernment. The prayerful character and safe environment this place offers support the articulation of the call among teens and enables them to partake of leadership roles in the congregation as junior deacons and ushers engaging in experiments in preaching and service to the greater community.

At Covenant United Church of Christ, "teens identified their vocational interests and received mentoring that examined their interests through interviews, questionnaires, and conversations with parents and program directors... A major focus of the program is on spiritual gifts that are identified and shared among peers and the larger congregation."⁴¹ It is apparent that the recognition of individual gifts serve to both ensure the success of each participant's participation in the program and to provide the necessary balance the church needs for meeting ministry needs for coming generations. Reverend Southern stated, "The pastor selected seven teenagers from within the church to participate in the ministry program that offered them the opportunity to explore their spiritual gifts within the church setting." The teenagers were required to make journal entries daily, read scripture and/or Biblical sources daily.

During the two programs, teenagers did not receive special instructions in church history, theology, or biblical interpretation. The teenagers worked closely with ministry

⁴⁰ Ethel Southern, phone interview by author, January 13, 2013.

⁴¹ Ibid.

leaders in various areas of the church as they explored their career paths in God's service. The mentors' job was to help the teenagers discern their call into vocational ministry. She added, "One student went into vocational ministry because of the program and others sought careers in different secular professions."⁴²

Reverend Southern indicated that one student has decided to go to seminary after receiving a bachelor's degree from the University of Arkansas. Several hinted information regarding their plans to attend seminary or pursue a life in ministry. The concern for youth in the African American community is often choosing between a secular career and ministry.

This historical study reveals many attempts in the history of the church to serve teenagers and young adults discerning a call into vocational ministry within the local church. The following chapter, Theological Foundations, will examine the church's call to discern and equip teenagers and adults for vocational ministry.

⁴² Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION ECCLESIOLOGY

The Greek word in the New Testament for church is *ekklesia*, which John H. Hammett defines as “believers gathered by Christ.”¹ Preparing and equipping believers to fulfill Christ’s commission to go into the world and teach underpins the theological study that focuses on teenagers and youth called to vocational ministry. Perry Downs defines the term theology as “the systematic inquiry into Scripture...a human attempt to make sense of and draw conclusions from God’s special revelation.”² Christ’s instructional paradigms set the foundation for the church to model and operate for the continuous growth of the kingdom. Therefore, the theological foundation for this project, ecclesiology, examines the office of the church and the call to equip teenagers and young adults to serve as conduits guaranteeing its existence until Christ returns.

John S. Hammett states in his book, *Biblical Foundations for the Baptist Churches: Contemporary Ecclesiology*, “virtually the whole Bible traces God’s work of preparing the church and working in and through it...The church is of central importance

¹ John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for the Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 14.

² Perry G. Downs, *Teaching For Spiritual Growth*, 15.

to God.¹ It is important to God because it is the body of believers called to salvation and set apart to spread the gospel of Christ throughout the world. The church is set apart to prepare youth, generation to generation. Adults who understand the theology of God's call for service in the kingdom often youth as the pulse of the realities of current society.

In the Old Testament God called youth from within the nation of Israel to serve as agents in the redemptive plan to save humanity from the penalty of sin. Old Testament youth, such as Esther, Samuel, David, Daniel, and Josiah, were instrumental in enlightening the chosen nation of God's sovereign authority and power as their creator. Young Jeremiah's calling, appointment, and anointing to serve as prophet to his people, as well as to other nations reflects God's intent on redeeming humanity out of the snares of Satan.

The New Testament records God's ultimate act of love by sending Jesus as an infant to be birthed by a young virgin for the salvation of all people who would believe in Him. Christ built His church on the foundation of God's love and compassion for all of humanity. The foundation of the church are steeped in the same principles of God's paradigm of calling, anointing, and appointing individuals of all ages as servants in ministry for kingdom building. This is inclusive of teenagers called by God to minister through their gifts in the local and universal church.

Andrew Sung Park states, "Creation was closely related to God's vision for humanity."² The ethos of God's love and compassion for humanity is evident throughout

¹ John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for the Baptist Churches*, 14.

² Andrew Sung Park, *Racial Conflict & Healing*, 129.

creation. First, God created a physical body and filled it with the essence of an individual, a spirit. The Creator breathed life into Adam and provided a communication system for allowing God's Spirit to dialogue with human spirits individually and corporately. The omniscience of God in creation manifested itself with the orchestration of calling and filling heaven and earth for humanity's redemption.

God's ability "to know all things actual and possible in one simple or divine act"³ leads to answers regarding youth's maturity level for teaching, preaching, and leadership roles in today's church. The Creator being, the Divine Spirit sees that the inexperience of youth does not negate the possibility of their successful service in kingdom building. In calling youth, as is done with adults, God simply equips one with all the necessities to carry out their assignments. God equips the willing heart, regardless of age.

Christ commanded the church to equip saints for the work of ministry to build up the Body of Christ. Theologically, teenagers are included because scripture states that the church consist of many, forming one body in Christ. All of its members are necessary for the church to function according to God's will. The Greek word for "all" is *pas*, which means "the whole" and "whosoever."⁴ The word *pas* definitively includes every believer as a member of Christ's local churches within the kingdom of God. Scripture states that, *each part is manifested by the Holy Spirit for the common good of peoples.*⁵

John Neufeld, the Director of Hearing the Call and Ministry Quest, asserts, "We, the church, have become cautious and even resistant to placing upon youth the weight of

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*: 1,250.

⁴ James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 68.

⁵ 1 Cor. 12:7, 11.

the question, "" Are you called to a ministry vocation?"⁶ This question surmises the intent of this ministry project. The writer contends that there are youth within New Faith discerning a call to a vocational ministry. Discerning church leaders and members exercise their spiritual gifts from God to recognize and encourage each other's gifts. This allows the local church to fulfill Christ's directive for the church. John Neufeld further asserts, "the teaching of 1 Corinthians 12 that everyone in the body is gifted for the benefit of the whole body, this is the determination of the Holy Spirit.

This is an inclusive statement scripted by Paul on the authority of God. The Greek definition for the word "every" found in 1 Corinthians 12:18, "'*hek'-as-tos*' means *each* or *every*: — any, both, each (one), every (man, one, woman), particularly."⁷ The word "every" is a profound word used throughout Scripture to emphasis commands and inclusive nature of God regarding who the Word is intended. "Everyone as defined in *Merriam-Webster* means, "every person"; "every" is defined as "being each individual or part of a group without exception."⁸ Even though the tendency of dominant members of society is to exclude those who do not meet their standards or qualifications, those excluded are included as God's beneficiaries and blessings from above.

⁶ John Neufeld, "Rediscovering the Calling and Sending Church," *Direction: a Mennonite Brethren Forum* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2003) 195, Accessed June 14, 2012, http://www.directionjournal.org/issues/gen/art_1309_.html.

⁷ Strong, *Concordance*, 27.

⁸ "Every – Definition and More," *Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, Accessed August 9, 2014, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/every>.

Origen states, “Christ and the church are ““one flesh”” like Adam and Eve; from the beginning of time they are made for each other.”⁹ The church must reciprocate the humble gifts of care, love, and giving of Himself by submitting to Christ and by maintaining the same spirit of humble obedience described in Philippians 2:5-8. Paul shares that Jesus’ equal status with God did not preclude His humble posture of obedience by not developing a reputation for self-gratification. Reading and studying the word of God, Jesus understood the depravity of humanity and that the Law, as by the Israelites, could not save humanity from the death penalty for sin.

Origen continues by stating, “The goodness of Christ appeared greater and more divine and truly of the Father when he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even on the cross.”¹⁰ In Jesus’ humanity, the study of the Scriptures and through God’s guidance, He developed the supreme revelation and understanding of the plan to regain the lost souls of the world from Satan and his continuous evil work to usurp the plan for as many people as possible. Jesus understood His horrendous assignment to defeat Satan in the battle for the souls of humanity and that the hope for salvation for many rested on His faith, trust and obedience to God’s for the completion of plan as He stated, “It is finished.”¹¹ The church must model Jesus’ obedience in understanding the theology of God’s sovereignty for the kingdom by equipping youth to complete their mission call.

By God’s authority, the office of the Holy Spirit serves as the mediator between Christ and His church to make known the call of all individuals within of the body.

⁹ Origen, *Origen: Spirit and Fire: a Theological Anthology of His Writings*, ed. Han Urs von Balthasar, trans. Robert J. Daly (Catholic University of America Press: Washington, D.C., 2001), 280.

¹⁰ Ibid., 292.

¹¹ John 19:55.

Called into ministry as a youth, “His work in ministry and deed was carried out through the Holy Spirit.”¹² At His baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, and He thus stated His ministry.¹³ Peter speaks of Christ’s baptism as God’s anointing Jesus of Nazareth with Holy Spirit and power.¹⁴ The Holy Spirit empowers members of the church with gifts of discernment that must edify the whole body of believers.

In the gospels, Jesus welcomed youth and children and often referred to them throughout His ministry. The terms adolescence and teenager are modern terms. Michael Eastman writes in his article, *Theological Approaches To Adolescence-Spirituality, and Faith Development*, “suggests that the Greek term for ‘youth’ or ‘young man [woman]’ covers the period from the twenty fourth to the fortieth year.”¹⁵ Stephens and Watkins states it is eighteen to thirty-nine¹⁶ and Fowler suggests thirteen to twenty-one.¹⁷

Throughout history discussion among scholars existed regarding how the chronological age groupings in the Bible with the general conclusion the terms used included old or young. Michael Eastman adds, “God is God for all ages...So we must not under estimate the spiritual experience and spiritual potential of the teenager.” This statement is fundamental for this study. God will continue to call, anoint, equip, and send teenagers to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rev. Charles Jenkins, senior pastor of the

¹² Origen, 150.

¹³ Mark 1:10.

¹⁴ Acts 10:38.

¹⁵ “Theological Approaches to Adolescence – Frontier Youth Trust,” , Accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.fyt.org.uk/v2/wp.../theological-approaches-to-adolescent.pdf>.

¹⁶ Benjamin Stephens III and Ralph C. Watson, 2.

¹⁷ James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1981), 52.

iconic Fellowship Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois received his call at age fifteen.¹⁸

Rev. Clay Evans prepared his young successor in ways similar to Paul.

The church, with seventy-five percent of its members over seventy years old, would have become defunct without Rev Evans' recognizing the gifts of and utilizing Rev. Charles Jenkins. He is a member of the Hip Hop generation, those born after the civil rights movement.¹⁹ He understood the teenagers and young adults in the surrounding community. God calls teenagers in the present time assuring that their un-churched contemporaries hear the effectual call of God for their salvation as well as minister to all members of the body of Christ according to their individual spiritual gifts.

Referencing Paul's message to the Corinthian church, Stephens and Watkins suggest that many young adults are spiritually mature for "solid food."²⁰ Their readiness is a calling from within, the Holy Spirit, which allows them to see God and the need for their service. They are ready because there are too many traditions that are strong holds within the church stifling their relationship with God.

Coles quotes Abraham Kuyper, stating, "The Church has never sufficiently confessed the influence of the Holy Spirit exerted in the work of Christ."²¹ This is a contributing factor to the resistance of some local churches to discern the call of teenagers and young adults into ministry. The Holy Spirit speaks to believers on behalf of

¹⁸ "Interview: Pastor Charles Jenkins," *Da Gospel Truth*, Accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.dagospeltruth.com/pastor-charles-jenkins>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ralph Watkins, *The Gospel Remix: Reaching the Hip Hop Generation* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007), 82.

²¹ Graham A. Cole, "He Who Gives Life," *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Book, 2007), 171.

Christ. The lack of knowledge concerning Jesus' ministry from the physical and spiritual realm makes it difficult for the church to operate in the fullness of the Lord.

God's paradigm of calling youth into vocational ministry accommodates the demand of Jesus' church simply continually harvesting new fields waiting to fulfill their life's call in the kingdom of God. The theology of God's plan provides every generation the resources required to keep Jesus' church healthy and thriving according to God's will for humanity. Jesus loves, cares for, and provides the needs of His church by filling it with saints who are called to be a witness for Him for the common good of the local and universal church. Baptist theologian John Leadly Dagg writes:

As true ministers of Christ's spiritual body, so their ministry is intended for its benefit: — "for the perfecting of the saints...for the work of the ministry...for the edifying of the body of Christ." Their office pertains to the spiritual, universal church, of which they are all members. The ministry of some of them may have a relation also to local churches, placed under their special charge; but they serve in these for the good of the whole body of Christ.²²

Teenagers called into vocational ministry are members of Christ's spiritual body. The church, with its many parts, works together for the glory of Jesus' commission for His church. The Holy Spirit provided every member of the church with spiritual gifts for the edification of Christ. Teenagers accepting the effectual call of Christ receive the inputting of the Holy Spirit in the like manner of adults, therefore, as members of the church, they must share their God given gifts for kingdom building.

²² John Leadly Dagg. *Manual of Theology, Systematic Theology*, vol. 17. (Rio, WI: Ages Digital Library Christian Library Series, 2006).

To enter the sacred office one must possess a sense of responsibility, heart-searching prayer, and the movement of the Holy Spirit.²³ God calls individuals in many different ways to ministry. Teenagers are no different from adults discerning a call into vocational ministry. Some will ponder and pray for a while, questioning whether they have a calling from God. Some may not recognize their call, mirroring Samuel's after Eli the priest who had the responsibility to mentor the youth, recognized it after three summonses from for the youth's service.²⁴ Further, they often experience anxiety about the reaction from their family and peers. Adults experiencing changes in life styles and spiritual direction, exhibit the same anxieties that are acceptable because of their age and assumed level of maturity.

Through the works of the Holy Spirit, ordained clergy must discern the true calling as members of the body of Christ, including teenagers and young adults. This is only possible when the clergy and laity are willing to recognize, appreciate, and celebrate the gifts of each member of the body. The local church must nurture and provide spiritual guidance for teenagers who are discerning a call into vocational ministry. This is a fundamental function of Christ's church. It is following the example of Christ as He discerned the hearts of every member of His team called to be His disciple. Dagg adds:

The lowest degree of responsibility rests on the church; but even this is solemn and important. The same Spirit dwells in the ministry and in the churches; and every member is concerned in whatever concerns the spiritual body of Christ.²⁵

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ 1 Samuel 1.

²⁵ Ibid.

Some members of the Body of Christ discern fellow believers calls into vocational ministry and others do not possess that this gift. How, however, Christ through the works of the Holy Spirit, equips the body with everything it needs to carry out the commission given to the church in Matthew 28:20. Through corporate prayer, every member actively contributes to the process of recognizing the call of teenagers and young adults. Every member is responsible for supporting the ministry of the church by remaining in prayer so that God can continue to supply the needs of the local and church universal for kingdom building.

In a statement addressing his church, Robert J. Morgan suggests that a sign of a healthy church is one that, throughout its history, God continually called youth into full-time Christian service as “pastors, teachers, missionaries, and evangelists in ministry.”²⁶ Christ feeds and provides a healthy diet of willing teenagers and young adults anxiously waiting to actualize their call into vocational ministry by sharing their gifts and talents given by the Holy Spirit with their local church.

Kunjufu Jawanza contends that church is the one place in society where the talents and gifts of teens are reserved for the future. He names education, business, sports, and entertainment as encouraging and supporting teenagers’ participation, to “reach their “full potential.”²⁷ The church supports the efforts of these entities with good intentions of drawing teenagers to church and support the preparation of their career goals. The same amount of effort is needed to provide a ministry for teenagers called by God to participate

²⁶ *The Call to Ministry: A Donelson Fellowship Pocket Paper*, Accessed February 3, 2013, <http://www.donelsonav.org/pocket/pp-misc01.html>.

²⁷ Kunjufu Jawanza, *What Is The Role of Teens in Your Church?*, 126.

to their highest potential in God's service. That is one of the primary missions of the church, to teach, equip, and send. Jawanza echoes Kenda Creasy Dean: "Teens do not need more programs. They need a relationship with Jesus."²⁸

Joyce Ann Mercer addresses the role of teenagers in the church: "The vocational role of youth in the church and in the world places young people in a distinctly prophetic role that is necessary for the transformation of the church."²⁹ Transformation is necessary for Christ's church. As a body of sinners saved by God's grace and mercy, the church collectively strives to become more like Jesus Christ.

Kenda Creasy Dean writes, "Like you and me, youth must listen for and respond to God's call to them to become ministers in their own right."³⁰ God having Divine Authority chooses the called to minister to the body and the world. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ calls individuals to service according to the needs of the local and universal church. In her book, *OMG: A Youth Minister's Handbook* Dean further states "American social institutions expect too little of teenagers, disenfranchising and infantilizing them and the churches are not an exception."³¹ Some religious leaders and congregants believe youth are too young to discern and understand the Word. They suggest that teenagers and

²⁸ Ibid, 20.

²⁹ "Christ and the Adolescent: a Theological Approach to Youth Ministry," in *The 1996 Princeton Lectures on Youth, Culture, and the Church* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary Digital Initiatives, 1996), Accessed September, 12, 2012, <http://www.ptsem.edu/lectures/?action=tei&id=youth-1996-05>).

³⁰ Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark, and David Rahn, *Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry: Starting Right* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2001), 16.

³¹ Kenda Creasy Dean, *OMG: A Youth Ministers' Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2010), 24.

young adults are immature and their inexperience precludes them from serving in the meat of ministry until they reach maturity.

Robin Maas addresses the issue by stating, “that the adolescent is not divided from her spiritual life and her psychosocial life, but rather she is a whole person. The spiritual must not be confused with the psychosocial life.”³² Adult leaders sometimes fail to realize that in all stages of human development the psychosocial aspect of ones’ being can constitute a hindrance for one answering God’s call. Maas continues with an analogy of Christ’s Divinity, that He was “fully divine and fully human.”³³ God’s plan of salvation for humanity was manifested because of Christ’s dual nature. Christ’s dual nature made His work on earth complete.

Dean contends that the church views youth as objects to be ministered to instead of agents of ministry.³⁴ This ideology regarding teenagers and young adults is not reflective of Christ’s view of youth. Examining scripture, Christ allowed the boy with the loaves of bread to minister to five thousand by simply giving what he had to offer. It is unlikely that the young boy was the only one with bread in the crowd. Christ’s love for children is expressed when the disciples attempted to turn children away from Him. He clearly stated that welcoming children is welcoming both Him and God with authority to teach and preach the Gospel. Christ exhibited special love and compassion for the marginalized members of the church and society.

³² “Christ and the Adolescent: a Theological Approach to Youth Ministry,” in *The 1996 Princeton Lectures on Youth, Culture, and the Church* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary Digital Initiatives, 1996), Accessed September 12, 2012, <http://www.ptsem.edu/lectures/?action=tei&id=youth-1996-05>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Dean, Clark, and Rahn, *Thinking Theologically*, 16.

The humanity of Christ identified with the growing experiences of youth. Recorded in Luke, his parents Joseph and Mary, searched for three days to find the twelve-year old Jesus in the temple sitting among scholars when the family was returning home from Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. He did not ask their permission. In His humanity, it is recorded in Luke 2:52, that He *grew in wisdom and statute, and in favor with God and man* (Luke 2:52).

Kunjufu Jawanza adds to the discussion, saying that the church should “unleash their gifts, talents strategies to defeat Goliath.”³⁵ The ills of society warrant a connection between teenagers and young adults within the church. Unresolved societal issues will affect their future quality of life. Through mass communication, they are more aware of the issues in society than previous generations. Watkins states that young adults want to be heard involved, mentored, and not monitored by elders of the church.³⁶ The church attempts to fix the issues without the leadership of those affected. Those who are the present and future of the church, teenagers can be agents that can prevent a local church from dying. Rev. Jenkins believes that the church can have thousands of new members while maintaining the “long timers.”³⁷

The praxis of the church is to allow teenagers called by God into ministry to serve in the here and now alongside adult church leaders. Joyce Ann Mercer adds, “Christian youth have a life purpose that exists within the purposes of God, not in spite of their

³⁵ Kunjufu Jawanza, *What Is The Role of Teens in Your Church?* , 6.

³⁶ Watkins, Ralph. *The Gospel Remix: Reaching the Hip Hop Generation* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007), 17.

³⁷ “Interview: Pastor Charles Jenkins,” *Da Gospel Truth*, Accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.dagospeltruth.com/pastor-charles-jenkins>.

young age but because of it.”³⁸ Every season in all aspects of life has meaning according to God’s plan of salvation and the continuum of the church. The assumption that God calls teenagers and young adults into vocational ministry only to serve other youth is a fallacy that hinders the growth of the kingdom. God determines the magnitude of the need and purpose of every youth called to serve without limiting their gifts and talents to accomplish their call as lights in this dark world.

There are churches, such as Beaumont Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, that installed a nineteen year old, Joshua Daniels as their senior pastor. God called him to preach and deliver his first sermon at age six.³⁹ The church is to help teenagers and young adults discern and recognize their call and gifts and train them as Christ did His disciples. In addition, Mercer states God directs youths’ call in the present tense. “The church acts like a giant switchboard and puts all young people into ‘call waiting,’ you can’t take your call until you are at least a young adult.

God’s call is not a future career for which one makes preparations. It is a way of life now.”⁴⁰ Paul, Timothy, and Titus worked together in ministry even though Timothy was in training. Christ requires the local church to teach and train everyone within the body according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit: according to the gifts for holy service to the Lord. Jesus did so with His disciples. Dean and Foster argue, “God has utmost

³⁸ “Christ and the Adolescent: a Theological Approach to Youth Ministry,” in *The 1996 Princeton Lectures on Youth, Culture, and the Church* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary Digital Initiatives, 1996), Accessed September 12, 2012, <http://www.ptsem.edu/lectures/?action=tei&id=youth-1996-05>.

³⁹ Tim Monzingo, “Teen Chosen to Lead 190-Member Beaumont Church,” in *Beaumont Enterprise*, August 8, 2013, Accessed June 5, 2013 <http://www.beaumontenterprise.com/news/article/Teen-chosen-to-lead-190-member-Beaumont-church-4717081.php>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

confidence in young people's ability to change the world, not to mention the church."⁴¹

Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Christ equips the church with gifts to meet the needs of kingdom building.

The revelation for Christ's church is simply that teenagers and young adults' are called into vocational ministry for God's kingdom to reach the myriad of unchurched youth within their contemporary society for the future of the church. God calls youth to fulfill Jesus' call for the church to continue the work He started while on earth in the same manner of mature adults are called. God calls youth for assignments according to the needs of society in any given time and season that are not always momentous but of equal value when the people are lead to Christ.

Robert J. Keeley in "The Church of All Ages" explains that, because the church will and must continue, the next generation must shape the next. This interplay of the generations reminds humanity of the truth of the gospel and the act of God is an indispensable element of the continuation of the church.⁴² In creation, God designed all living things to reproduce itself for the preservation of its species and purpose in the kingdom. In the animal world, the reproduction cycle and ecological balance, if not disturbed by humans, sustains a food chain system essential in the preservation all species within its kingdom. The failure to reproduce new life results in the extinction and dysfunction of one's species that affects the life of other animals and perpetuates death throughout the kingdom because their food source is out of production.

⁴¹ Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster, *The God Bearing Life*, 66.

⁴² Howard Vanderwell, "Biblical Values to Shape the Congregation," in *The Church of All Ages Generations Worshipping Together*, ed. Howard Vanderwell (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute: 2008), 27.

The church limits the food supply to the dying world when it fails to reproduce itself by birthing new life in the Body of Christ by equipping teenagers and young adults teenagers to go into the world and feed them the Word of God. The church's food chain is broken when it fails to reproduce itself by equipping youth to feed the good news of salvation to all people and continuously provide the appropriate spiritual nutrition for individual and generational calls within the church. Christ's church is the living source that represents the Bread of Life and Living Water that gives life and hope in the dying world. The church under girds its survival by birthing teenagers and young adults called into vocational ministry who are equipped to follow Timothy's example without allowing anyone to despise their youth as they prepare for a life of service for the kingdom.

John Neufeld writes in *Rediscovering the Calling and Sending Church*, "We the church, have become cautious and even resistant to placing upon our youth the weight of the question," Are you called to a ministry vocation?"⁴³ This question warrants discernment from church leaders, however, this question is not enough. When God calls youth into vocational ministry, a discerning church recognizes the gifts and talents of its youth by providing a safe and nurturing environment for them to grow spiritual and prepare them for service to God.

The church has the obligation to minister to believers building them up to maturity in faith and equip the saints for the work in ministry until all obtain the unity of faith.⁴⁴ The work in Christian ministry is not exclusively for adults, but fundamentally for

⁴³ John Neufeld, "Rediscovering the Calling and Sending Church," *Direction: a Mennonite Brethren Forum* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2003), Accessed June 8, 2013, <http://www.directionjournal.org/article/1309>.

⁴⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 867.

all members of the body as the Holy Spirit sanctifies believers, making them more like Christ's messengers to the world. The church cannot efficiently sustain God's ordained status in the world without employing the examples of ministry dictated in Scripture for increasing the kingdom.

Through joint generational discernment, the church must acknowledge and apply the theology of God's paradigm of calling, anointing and appointing biblical youth in their context and *chronos* to the mission for which teenagers and young adults are called into vocational ministry to assure the fulfillment of the Great Commission for coming generations in the current context. The church is the body of Christ containing diverse members equally called by God to share in kingdom building. Preparing youth called into vocational ministry is God's charge to the church, assuring that the church remains *throughout the generations forever and ever*.⁴⁵

James Cone entered ministry at age sixteen⁴⁶ to become the author of the black liberation theology states that, "Theology is the church reflection upon the meaning of its faith-claim that God's revelation is identical with the historical freedom of the weak and helpless."⁴⁷ God called the church to be to the conduit for teaching and preaching Christ's message of equality with all peoples on earth. When the church fails to use scripture to challenge oppression, people disengage and leave the church broken hearted because false doctrines hinder them from realizing the fullness of God's love.

⁴⁵ Eph. 3:21.

⁴⁶ James H. Cone, *The God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 2.

⁴⁷ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 180.

God called Katie Canon, who began to study for ministry as a teenager, to remediate the practice of demeaning women through the misinterpretation of scripture. Her theology functions well within Cone's theology of liberation, which address the disenfranchisement and marginalization of oppressed members of society. Cannon addresses a solution by offering a Womanist hermeneutic approach to interpreting scripture stating,

A Womanist hermeneutic identifies the frame of sexist-racist social contradiction housed in sacred rhetoric that gives women a zero-image of ourselves. This analysis deconstructs biblically based sermons that portray female subjects as bleeding, crippled, disempowered, objectified, purified, or mad. It enables us to ask hard questions about the responsibility of Black preachers to satisfy the whole congregation's spiritual hunger with their intellectual grasp, mastery of Scripture, social analysis, and constructive skill.⁴⁸

Cannon's depiction of the image of women presented negatively in sermons delivered by undiscerning preachers minimizes women's self-image, and clearly under minds the messages of love, compassion, deliverance, and hope. The implications are particularly a concern for the church because the negative portrayal extends itself into the issue of the rejection of female youth along older women call into vocational ministry solely because of their gender. The eisegesis of God's Word defeats Jesus' mission to dismantle obstacles that hinders humanity's relationship with God. The conscious and unconscious practice of excluding youth called into vocational ministry decreases the effectiveness and efficiency of the Christ's mission call and God desire to bless every human with the

⁴⁸ Katie G. Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (New York, New York: Continuum, 1995), 115.

gift of salvation. The next chapter, Theoretical Foundations, discusses the social theories associated with preparing teenagers and young adults called into vocational ministry.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This essay discusses how social science theories for education, sociology, and vocational psychology (also known as career development) play intricate roles in the ministry project, SOM. This six-week ministry sought to assist youth in identifying and understanding their call to God's service. In the process, participants received instruction on the Bible, which includes the theology of God's call; Jesus, the Holy Spirits and the church role in the plan of salvation for humanity.

Societal conditions have placed an extra burden on the African-American church. Sociological realities of the oppressive inequalities in education, employment, health, and housing required the church to meet secular as well as spiritual needs of its congregants and community. The dogma of the dominant society against African-Americans necessitated the need for holistic services for its communities. The church often serves as a political platform, refuge for the homeless, social service center, mutual aid society and education center in many communities. Faced with the urgency of addressing socio-economic needs listed above, church unconsciously neglects the ministerial education and training for the contemporary Timothy called to serve.

David, Samuel, Jeremiah, John the Baptist and Timothy answered the call to serve in the plan of salvation for humanity and training, by either God or spiritual leaders called to assure the fulfillment of their mission call. Like Jesus, they grew physically, in knowledge, and spiritually in preparation for the work the Creator called them to fulfill. Biblically, no one called into ministry started serving before receiving instructions from God and/or a spiritual leader.

The youth were not born servants, but rather, developed in their ministry after God's shaping, molding, and testing for their individual purpose and assignment for humanity's salvation. The length of training varied, oftentimes dependent on their assignments, culture, and societal needs of the day. With this understood, it is important that the same amount of effort is exerted to support teenagers called into ministry. This entails understanding the theology of the word behind the call as well as the secular social science theories associated with career development, education and sociological issues addressed in ministry.

Some believers dispute the use of secular approaches and social sciences, in relationship to understanding God's redemptive plan for humanity. The misconception prohibits individual from understanding that social sciences are a gifts from God created to enhance individuals understanding of self and the social relationships between people and people groups. The gifts are given to individuals as a career to meet the human needs of the church and un-church. This, in a sense is one of God's methods of placing Christian in the midst of unbelievers as witnesses for the kingdom.

contends that secular theories will possibly supersede biblical truths. This worldview reflects a lack of understanding of the unity of God's Word. Perry G. Downs states:

A Christian worldview sees validity in both science and theology, recognizing that both are necessary. When properly understood, these are not contradictory in nature but present a more complete picture of reality than can be achieved by viewing either the social sciences or theology exclusively...God is the source of reality. God reveals truth in two modes: creation (general revelation and the Word (special revelation)).¹

Both social science and theology are gifts from God, designed to help humanity understand God's truth. Studying each subject affords believers knowledge of the Creator's wisdom and expression. Social science theories provide a systematic approach to understanding God's creation. Social sciences are a study of God's created order and an understanding of general revelation.

Assessment tools, such as career inventories and aptitude tests, enhance individuals' ability to select a career path that is best suited for their interests and aptitudes. Reflecting theologically, vocational assessment tools allow individuals to get a glimpse of what God has given them. Spiritual gift tests enhances individual understanding of self as it enlightens one's role in kingdom building for the continuation of the church for coming generations. They assist in developing an understanding of how God molds one spiritually and socially for their call in life.

Aptitude test generally helps individuals identify their natural gifts that are easily discerned generally by community members. This recognition is instrumental in confirming appropriate career choices. During adolescence, discernment and support

¹ Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth*, 18.

from their spiritual community can be crucial for holistic development particularly true for those going into vocational ministry.

Vocational psychologists have developed theories pertaining to career choices. Major theorists suggest that there are stages of vocational development for human beings that are grouped by age with variables acknowledging socioeconomic environments, cultural influences, and individual maturation. Vocational psychologist, Lawrence E. Ginzberg theorizes that there are three major stages in human vocational development with each enhanced by sub-categories. Regarding teenagers, his theory indicates that:

... during the 15th and 16th years, students undergo a very marked change in their approach to vocational choice. Of special note is the idea of service to society. They seem to become aware that work offers more than the potential for satisfying their own needs. ... Occurring at 17 or about 18 ... individuals begin to face the necessity to make immediate, concrete, and realistic decisions about his vocational future.²

The desire to serve others is not always a priority for teenagers; however, those called to vocational ministry generally possess a servant's heart.

Systematic theology is humanity's attempt to understand scripture. It allows one to analyze and digest the Word and make life applications in the world today. Implementing *Sermon on the Mount* ministry will serve to bring ministerial staff together to give the much-needed support to the next generation of leaders for Christ's church.

Choosing between ministry and a career is major step for teenagers. The process can become overwhelming and stressful. Often, not knowing what is going on within

² Samuel H. Osipow, *Theories of Career Development*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973), 87.

themselves, they can feel alone and different from their peers as they struggle with their call. Career decision making can be difficult due to the spiritual need of selecting an occupation pleasing to God. Josh McDowell writes, “The choice of a ministry or career is one of many significant choices that must be faced in the years of adolescence or young adulthood. It is a choice that weighs heavily on many young minds, one which mature godly guidance is warranted.”³

Fundamentally, the church leadership is where people look for mature godly guidance. It has the responsibility of nurturing all members for their assignment in kingdom building. Unless a youth enrolls in parochial schools, guidance and counseling leading to spiritual discernment is null in most secular settings. Ministerial education is a pastoral function as found in the books of Timothy, Titus, and Jesus’ mentorship with His disciples.

In addition, African-American youth must also face sociological issues that influence their career decision. Systemic racism remains a negative source in society and its evil posture continues to plague marginalized and disenfranchised communities with high jobless rates and inadequate schools systems that feed the hunger pains for a better way of life for many youth. The strides accomplished during the Civil Rights movement often appears stagnated by youth who reside in unsafe neighborhoods consisting of substandard housing, food and retail deserts and high unemployment rates. Highly educated middle class African Americans processing disposable incomes find themselves

³ Josh McDowell, Bob Hostetler, *Josh McDowell's Handbook on Counseling Youth*, 503.

in food and retail deserts simply because the powers that be decides to ignore the consumer needs within their communities.

Andrew Sung Park quotes Korean minjung theologian Young-Hak Hyun's defines as *han*:

Han is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered, sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of acute pain and sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the body writhe and wriggle and an obstinate urge to take "revenge" right the wrong all these combined.⁴

The "blues" defined this state of being in early African American history, today as various forms of external inflicted depression are the result of the unresolved resentment against injustice Parks addresses. Addressing the issue from a Biblical perspective is essential for personal growth, spiritually and psychologically, for teenagers. The perpetuating stance against equality and marginalization of the African-American community warrants the discussion enabling participants in SOM project to explore their possible feelings of han and its presence in other cultures.

Jesus' ministry affords SOM participants the opportunity to model His flawless service and compassion for others as He exercised preaching and teaching the Gospel. Jesus exemplified ultimate compassion for the woman at the well, defended the woman about to be stoned, and permitting doubting Thomas to touch Him after His resurrection. He understood the psychic, hurt, pain, despair, doubts, fears, and the depraved human condition in the diverse society in which He lived. In doing so, He applied His knowledge of the scriptures to every human situation He encountered.

⁴ Andrew Sung Park, 9.

God designed humanity with the capacity to obtain, retain, and understand information that translates to knowledge. Jesus' attainment of growth in stature and knowledge demonstrates through science and theology that He takes on human form on earth. He was born of a virgin (Matt. 1:23). Luke 2:52 reports *And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man* (NIV). He studied scriptures (Luke 4:17-24) and disseminated the knowledge He gained to listeners in truth and in faith.

The truth was obtained simply because He knew and understood the scriptures (Luke 24:44). Revelation of the Creator's sovereignty is accessible to human understanding through both theology and science. Interestingly, psychologist James W. Fowler theorizes that, in correlation with Piaget's theory of human cognitive development, believers' faith develops in distinct stages. This is symbolized by the movement from "synthetic-conventional" to "individuated-reflective" faith. Synthetic-conventional faith reflects serious, tensions, clashes, or contradictions between valued authority sources and taking responsibility for one's own decisions and commitments. Individualized-reflective faith the individual experiences doubles development: the self-identity and world-view are distinguished from others."⁵

Human growth and development occurs at individual rates according to variables such as, ethnicity, environment, exposure, interest, socioeconomics and religious training can affect one's growth. Often measurements are restrictive to the learning process. More

⁵ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 46.

importantly, for this essay, it is important to realize that God's plan supersedes humanity's rationale and theories. Chronological age and length of years as a believer does not necessarily determine the depth of one's faith.

Cognitive knowledge of the Lord is essential for all believers and church leaders must guide youth toward Biblically founded theology in developing a belief system founded in truth and faith assuring accuracy in teaching and preaching the word to the world. Perry G. Downs states in his book *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education*,

Faith has an intellectual (notitia) or cognitive aspect. There is an element of knowledge or content to faith. Scripture affirms that faith means believing certain things are true. There is a content to be believed, and that content has specifics. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 Paul say, "We believe that Jesus died and rose again," and John 20:31 declares that the purpose of the Gospel is "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."⁶

Downs suggest that faith requires substance. The specifics or content of the Word must not be replaced by form, but rather what is believed is as much an acute reality as that which they believe.⁷ Content and knowledge is the material by which educators work. It is the task and responsibility of the teacher to impart sound biblical information to participants preventing false doctrines from soiling their faith in the inundated by mass media that make a myriad of religious beliefs into their homes.

⁶ Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth*, 18.

⁷ Ibid.

Pedagogy, the science of teaching, is a major component of the SOM ministry project. The learning process includes audio-visual aids, lecture, and tactile, guest speakers to accommodate the various learning styles of each participant. This method enhances the learning process by allowing individuals to share what God has poured into them edifying their local church as well as the universal church. McKinney and Youngblood states:

Christian education, a form of teaching that occurs within a community of faith that seeks greater knowledge of Christ for the purpose of...making disciples can greatly benefit from attention of learning styles, developmental difference and an array of methods to make every component of Christian education vibrant, and a meaningful experience.⁸

A theory of teaching, as outlined, enhances the learning process. Teachers must possess a clear understanding and belief in what they disseminate to their students with spiritual integrity. The use of several teaching methods assures the probability of accommodating the various learning styles of participants.

Audio-visuals, such as segments from Moody Bible Institute's six set video, *Wonders of God's Creation* enhances participants' knowledge and understanding of God's creation. It explains how science translates all of God's creation in language comprehensible by humanity. Ministerial staff will share their calling and ministry specialties, allowing students to understand how God calls people for special assignments. Social sciences are a gift from God that make is possible for humanity to

⁸ Lora-Ellen McKinney and Johnny Ray Youngblood, *Christian Education in the African American Church: A Guide for Teaching Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), 29.

understand the physical and mental nature of people. Each is valuable in all aspects of human life. The guidance of the Holy Spirit and observing the participants will assure ministry success through the ministry program.

Integration of Theological Foundation Work and Practical Ministry

The integration of the biblical, historical, and theological foundations is crucial for the implementation, program design, and curriculum for the development of SOM. God's plan of salvation for humanity and call youth to serve in teaching, preaching, and prophesizing into the world threads each foundation studies together to defend the writer's argument for the implementation a vocational ministry for youth. The lessons learned and knowledge obtained from the Biblical foundations research and study undergirds the curriculum.

The acquisition of a theological understanding of the sovereignty of God's call, clothed in an unmatched love for humanity increases the likelihood of participants' acceptance of God's will for their life as servants for the kingdom. The study of Biblical youths' assignments changed that direction of history set the course for the actualization of God's ultimate plan through Jesus Christ augments the ministry program.

The Biblical foundation is the sustaining basis for implementing the SOM for discerning teenagers. Scripture reflects God's desire to restore humanity back to its rightful relationship with the Lord after Adam and Eve's fall in the Garden of Eden. God's biblical paradigm of calling youth to serve as messengers for the redemption plan of salvation serves as a model for today's church. Biblical foundations serve to reflect the

depth of responsibility and trust God exhibited when calling youth to service and addresses questions regarding today's teenager's maturity levels for recognizing and discerning their call.

Biblical foundation gives substance to the project by providing subjects to study, developing an understanding of how God communicates love, compassion, and patience to humanity manifested through Christ for humanity's salvation. This is accomplished through lessons focusing on the purpose and ways God called biblical models: Jeremiah, Timothy, and Mary. The lessons on Jesus' call of the disciples, the Holy Spirit, and the establishment of the church serves as the foundation for understanding the fulfillment of Matthew 20:19 until Jesus Christ return His bride.

Participants learned how God used them to usher out old religious and societal systems that operated against God's will for humanity. Subsequent lessons will examine how the youth in scripture were instrumental in bringing in new systems that changed the course of the world. Their obedience found them favor with God and serve as models for spiritual formation lessons

Kenda Creasy Dean exquisitely states, "In the Biblical witness, God seem especially fond of calling upon unlikely suspects, for such missions, young people-impetuous, inexperienced, improbable choices by all accounts-figured proximately among God's "chosen" in both Hebrew and the New Testament."⁹ Students will examine how the roles of youth in scripture called by God were not second in nature to that of their adult counterparts.

⁹ Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster, 17.

Biblical foundation is meaningful to the project by helping participants understand that discerning a call to vocational ministry was not necessarily an easy assignment for the youth in scripture. It helps to observe how political, religious, and societal ideologies affected both these youth's call and ministry to their people and the world. The study of the young servants will assist project participants to examine their own calls into vocational ministry and its ramifications for today's society. Furthermore, project participants will benefit from the research done to complete the foundation paper as it enlightens their awareness of God's plan for their individual life as kingdom building agents.

The assurance of God's devotion, guidance, and love recorded throughout Scripture serves to encourage participants to trust God as they discern their call and walk in their ministry. Biblical youth succeeded in their mission calls and difficult assignments through their obedience and God's unfailing desire to redeem. Biblical foundations provide the platform for project participants to read and understand God's creation of heaven and earth as an orchestrated system of calling and filling vessels as conduits for fulfilling the plan to save humanity from eternal death.

The ecclesiological foundation's prevalence to the project provides a source for lessons to enhance participant's knowledge and an understanding foundation for a lesson on the mission and duties of Christ's church in God's plan for salvation. Jesus continued in the New Testament what God started in the Old Testament by building His church. In so doing, Jesus used youth to share in His ministry as examples of faith and objects of

His miracles. Jesus established the church to equip saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ to go and teach the gospel throughout the world for kingdom building.

Supportive research materials gathered for this study directly relates to the local and universal church's mission to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world as commissioned in Matthew 28:18. Today's youth find themselves inundated with social ills those previous generations refuted as the works of the devil that have become platforms for equal rights. Hidden youth sub-cultural ideologies that threaten the spiritual life of coming generation warrant the church's urgency and boldness to discern and equip youth to tear down and build up for God's kingdom.

God's calls servants to meet the immediate spiritual and social needs for the common good of all societies by summoning individuals capable of teaching and preaching messages of love and salvations to the dying world. The church's continual effectiveness of kingdom building is predicated on its mission to prepare youth God sets aside as leaders to build Christ's church for coming generations until He returns for His heirs.

The ecclesiological study connects God's plan of salvation to Christ's gift of salvation to the body of the church. Therefore, it is imperative that participants begin thinking theologically about the church in today's society. Further, the theological study is meaningful to the project because it serves to enlighten participants regarding the physical and spiritual make up of individuals within the local church. Each member of

the church body is gifted and that strengthens the body, allowing it to reach a diverse multitude of people. Most importantly, the theological study serves to present the role of the Holy Spirit in the redemption plan.

Christ left the Holy Spirit to lead and guide the church and its members in the service of the Lord. The Spirit is the revealer, the one who, in the language of John, “takes the things of Christ and makes them known to us.”¹⁰ God’s theology of having no respect of person deems youth as equal members of the body and anoints them for vocational ministry in the same manner as adults. God speaks through the Holy Spirit to call and enlighten members to their call, demonstrating that the body of Christ is to see each other for the common good of the whole for kingdom building.

The historical foundation serves to examine how the church has prepared its young ministers for vocational ministry. Scripture records Samuel, Elijah and Elisha forming the first religious schools for prophets (one Sam. 10:11; 2 Kings 2:3, 5). They were schools for young men called to be prophets in God’s service. The significance for the project rest with the fact that Samuel is called in his youth to service (1 Sam. 3:11-14). He was a priest (1 Sam. 2:35, 7:9; 13:8-10) who trained young men for ministry.

Research data focused primarily on church youth ministries and programs that encouraged youth involvement in leadership or special youth worship services. The premise of this ministry project is the enrollment of teenagers called to vocational ministry in a program that guides them through the process of discerning their call and

¹⁰ Graham A. Cole, 261.

spiritual gifts for God's service. The project provides enhanced biblical and basic theological foundation education to prepare the teenagers for further study in a seminary or divinity school.

This information led the researcher to the Foundation for Theological Education (FTE) which provides one-time grants to churches and religious organizations for the development of programs designed to mentor and train individuals in ministry. Grantees are listed on the FTE's website, which gives an overview of the programs funded. The research interviewed two church directors by telephone regarding their program for youth. The information gathered will be useful in implementing and managing the SOM at New Faith Baptist Church International.

The parents preferred that their teens complete college and secure lucrative paying jobs so that they can improve their economic status in life. Seeking vocational ministry is only acceptable after a well-paying job is obtained.¹¹ Another competing force for youth programs is the competition with time youth spend engaging in school and special after school activities. Some parents consider the church project as completive rather than a ministry training opportunity for their youth discerning a call.

¹¹ "Lott Carey: Touching Lives with Transforming Love," Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention, Accessed August 14, 2014, <http://lottcarey.publishpath.com/>.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Providing a vocational ministry program for teenagers and young adults struggling to discern their call from God, will enhance New Faith's ability to sustain Christ's church for generations to come by fulfilling the Great Commission to go and teach all nations. Youth who do not discern a call will acquire a better understanding of their spiritual gifts to share within the church the possibility of a call to vocation later in life.

The ministry project serves as an intervention for the absence of a ministry designed specifically to provide a continuum of the church for those who have matriculated from a myriad of youth ministries and programs. They will begin preparing for church leadership and a foundation for divinity school or seminary by obtaining increased knowledge of the theology of God's call introduced in Biblical Foundations.

Chapter Six introduces the implementation the ministry project at New Faith for youth struggling to discern a call into vocational ministry. In a safe and nurturing environment, students increased their knowledge and understanding about the theology of

God's call, the role of the church, and the Holy Spirit. Participants successfully completed the spiritual gifts test, increasing their understanding of their purpose for kingdom building. Diana Etindi suggests:

This failure of churches to participate effectively in ministry preparation does not necessarily happen as a conscious act. But, if there is not a strategic means of mentoring or educating ministers within a church setting, by default, prospective pastors, preacher, chaplains, missionaries and other full-time ministers coming forth from that will prepare for ministry by those outside that church community.¹

Etindi's statement has substance with additional implications. Often teenagers and young adults become disillusioned with the local church while they are experiencing anxieties and challenges of adolescence. Perhaps, the most prevalent phenomenon they encounter is the absence of patience. Products in today's society seems as though everything available to youth is instantaneous: microwaves, MP3 downloads, video games and the internet provided instant answers to any question. This has created a culture that lacks the ability to wait and grow. Faith, patience, obedience, trust and love are fundamental gifts from God that under gird Christianity.

Research Design

The ministry project is designed to (1) increase participants' understanding of God's sovereign authority and purpose for individuals called into vocational ministry. (2) To increase knowledge of the mission of Christ's church when discerning the call of all

¹ Diana Etindi, *"Training Ministers From A Black Church Perspective,"* (D. Min. diss., Anderson University School of Theology, 2011).

members of the body. (3) Identify and increase their understanding of their individual spiritual gifts. (4) Increase and understand the mission assignment of biblical and contemporary youth called into vocational ministry within the context of their society. This increased awareness of the theology of God's call will serve to relieve anxieties associated with making career choices based on financial considerations over vocational ministry and the peer and family pressures adolescents often struggle with through in life.

Class activities will include lectures augmented by student discussions, games, audio-visual clips, guest speakers, and journaling. The instructional portion of the sessions included biblical, historical, and theological information gathered for this project. Lessons are augmented by the use of Segments from Moody Bible Institute's six video set *Wonders of God's Creation* augmented the lesson to demonstrate the creative authority power of God. Internet and newspaper articles featuring contemporary youth called into vocational ministry provided the opportunity for the participants to identify with church leaders from their generation who understand their cultural and societal concerns.

The textbook, *Call Waiting: God's Invitation to Youth* by Larry L. Swain and Kay Wilson containing scriptural references from the New International version of the Bible, to enhanced classroom instruction. The resource provided accounts and discussions about biblical youth called into vocational ministry and their role in God's plan of Salvation for humanity. It also presented questions designed to allow the participants to examine their role in Christ's Great Commission. A grant awarded for research on vocations from the

Lilly Endowment, Inc. to Mercer in Atlanta, GA, provided the resource for the development this publication.²

The success of the ministry project is contingent on the learning experience of the respective individuals, willingness to accept a call into vocational ministry. The acquisition of a clear understanding of God's sovereign authority when calling teenagers and young adults to serve in vocational ministry increased knowledge of their spiritual gifts and increased knowledge concerning biblical and contemporary youth who have served the kingdom. The researcher did not expect every participant would discern a call into vocational ministry; however, the discovery of their spiritual gifts will enlighten their understanding of God's purpose for their life for the future of God's kingdom.

The writer contends that there are teenagers and young adults that are not walking in their call because they lack the support from their parents. A byproduct of this ministry project would be an increased parental support for their youth through family discussions regarding the weekly lessons.

Summary of Methods for Data Collection

John W. Creswell contends in his book *Research Design* that there are three types of research methods. They include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods.³ A qualitative methods approach is employed for this study. Currently adopted by educational researchers, the qualitative research method is rooted in cultural

² Larry L. McSwain and Kay Wilson Shurden, *Call Waiting*, vi.

³ John W. Creswell, *Research Design*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 3.

anthropology and American sociology. It allows the researcher to investigate the teenagers and young adults discerning a call into vocational ministry through conversational analyses.⁴ Significantly, the method allows the researcher to understand “participant’s perceptions, experiences and the way they make sense of their lives.”⁵ In addition, this method of research focuses on the process that is occurring as well as the product or outcome. The triangulation, meaning multiple methods of data collection for the analysis,⁶ includes a ten question pre- and post- questionnaire, weekly journaling and a spiritual gifts test.

The sessions focus on God’s pathos for humanity manifested through Christ’s death and resurrection. Each session is founded on God’s sovereign authority and power to call, gift and prepare youth for vocational ministry in the same way they are experienced by adults: to serve as conduits for teaching and preaching the Word of God which leads individuals to accept God’s gift of salvation from the penalty of sin.

Students will open the sessions with prayer and reading of scripture. To stimulate the youth by exhibiting love, compassion, and a nurturing environment, Sunday meals are scheduled for the youth. Prepared by the writer, the meals will include fruit and vegetables in an effort to promote healthy eating habits. This activity serves to allow time for communion and fellowship among the youth and adults. Modeling Jesus, this approach affords the writer to exhibit a hospitable environment that the church often reserves for adults.

⁴ Ibid., 195.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. 221.

Implementation

The writer announced the ministry project during Sunday youth service at eleven o'clock service over a four-week period. The first two weeks the writer presented a brief description and overview of the ministry project and during subsequent weeks, announced during regular Sunday service announcements. Those interested in participating received applications containing a brief description of the ministry project and student's demographic information following Sunday each service.

Parental signatures were required on all applications for the junior and high school students. Thirteen youth applied with parental support granted for all applicants except one male youth. The parent did not offer an explanation in spite the youth's enthusiastic interest in participating in the ministry program. The writer accepted all youth expressing an interest in participation parental permission recorded on the application form. Most of the youth that showed a strong interest in vocational ministry were leaders in Sunday youth service. They were already using their gifts on the praise team, speaking at the "open mic" which is mentioned in Chapter One and their parents are strong supporters of the church or in leadership positions. Ten applicants made commitments to participate in the program. The diverse group consisted of junior high, high school, and college students. The age and gender reflected four females consisting of two twelve-year olds, and two sixteen-year olds. Male participants consisted of a twenty-four year old, one eighteen-year old, one seventeen-year old, two sixteen-year olds and two fourteen-year olds. The group included three siblings whose father is the pastor of missions and justice at New Faith, two of the siblings are members of Timothy,

group of junior and high school students trained by the children's ministry director to assist with Saturday and Sunday children's church.

Sessions were held in the Genesis classroom building directly after Sunday morning youth service. The six-week ministry program began on Sunday, November 10, 2013 and concluded on December 15, 2013. Session opened with prayer and a scripture reading led by participants. Each participant received a binder to contain the instructional materials, handouts, and journal entries at the beginning of each session. *Call Waiting: God's Invitation to Youth* by Larry L. McSwain and Wilson Shurden served as the textbook for the ministry project. The participants returned the binders and textbook to the writer at the end of each session to assure that the teaching tools for each session and a complete collection of resources for the participants to review for reference was available as their journey continued through.

A fellowship meal prepared by the writer followed each session, which allowed participants to dialogue among themselves and ask questions regarding lesson of the day. Her husband, Steve, and professional associate, Dr. Cheryl set-up, served the meals and engaged in meaningful conversations associated with the lessons during the fellowship meals each Sunday.

The first session began with a brief overview of the ministry project after individual introductions were completed. The ten-item pre-test, followed by the Cokesbury Youth Spiritual Gifts Test (CYSGT) with an explanation of their purpose by the writer served to prepare the participants for their new journey of discovery. At the

request of the participants, the writer scored the CYSGT after the session and presented the scores in the following session. This provided time for the instructional learning process to begin.

The youth exhibited much enthusiasm as they anticipated the results of their individual spiritual gifts test. After a brief discussion about the Fall in the Garden of Eden, the session continued with the youth responding to the question, “What is the purpose of God’s plan of salvation for the remission of sin for humanity?” Several participants responded, with this paraphrase: “Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the Tree of Knowledge after Satan told Eve that she would not die” They quoted, *So God sent Jesus to die for our sins so that people can have everlasting life.*

The next item on the agenda was Carman Licciardello’s dramatization video, “The Courtroom,”⁷ which proved to be a very powerful teaching tool. The narrator, played by Carman, asked the question “If tonight you stood in heaven’s court to seek eternal favor, would you face Jesus Christ as judge, or would you face Him as Savior?”⁸ The video set the atmosphere for the subsequent sessions by proving the relational theology of God’s call for individuals into vocational ministry. It allowed participants to visualize the pathos of Christ’s office in the plan of salvation for humanity as the Risen Savior. It also served to communicate the power of Christ’s sacrificial gift that frees all guilt and shame for believers.

⁷ Carman - The - Courtroom, Accessed October 1, 2013, YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWP AhGu467o>).

⁸ Ibid.

The video depicts a young adult African-American male who appears to be in his early twenties standing before God on judgment day. The narrator introduces Satan as the prosecuting attorney. The accuser describes the young man as a “worthless piece of trash...a hopeless wretch...who deserves eternal judgment in hell.”⁹

As God prepares to pass judgment, the savior Jesus Christ appears as the defense attorney. Satan’s posture becomes more intense and he is not pleased to see Jesus. Depicting Jesus, Carman states “two thousand years ago He was crucified, died, [and] placed in a tomb.” “The power of God hit me, and I walked out of that grave alive and well with resurrection power.”¹⁰ Satan repeats, “the sins were written in the book and insist that God check the book.” God opens the book to find the Blood of Jesus has washed his sins away. The young man receives his gift of salvation. Rejoicing, the questions the youth “Is your name listed in the Book of Life?”

The writer continued the session by asking participants to verbalize their thoughts about the video. Everyone responded that the video was about Jesus and salvation. They commented about Satan telling God about the young man’s sins as if God did not know. The video enhanced their ability to understand Satan’s desire to still, kill, and destroy an individual’s salvation. The writer complimented the participants for their responses and asked how the video related to God’s calling of youth into vocational ministry.

After a short interlude of silence, the writer explained that God calls young individuals to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world so that they will be ready for

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

their judgment day. The writer stated that everyone receives the effectual call from God. It is necessary, however, for individuals to be introduced to the way of the cross. The writer reminded the participants that God calls individuals, including teenagers and young adults, to teach and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world as commanded in the Great Commission. Those called into vocational ministry are charged to lead people to Christ.

The fellowship meal became a question and answer session. The participants asked the writer's husband questions pertaining to early church history, and its development through the years. They particularly inquired about early church leaders and early church splits. After a brief church history lesson offered by the writer's husband, the youth made journal entries.

The ministry program was reduced to five sessions when the second session was cancelled on Sunday, November 17th due to a tornado, which touched down in Frankfort, the town adjacent to Matteson on its west side during the 11:00 service. Pastor Felder ordered everyone in the Genesis building to abandon classrooms with windows. The children were moved from Harvey Hall, which is also located in the Genesis building, into the basement for safety reasons. Some of the ministry project participants were also members of Timothy. They exhibited excellent leadership skills and compassion by ministering through songs for the children. It should be noted that they volunteered to share their gifts and talents, proving their ability to discern and serve the needs of others.

Prior to the participants arriving for the second session, the names of each gift listed on the CYSGT with its definition hidden in various gift wraps ranging from

eloquently decorated bags, boxes, plain white envelope and placed on a table by the entrance door. Some of the articles contained two or more gifts listed from CYSGT. The second session began with participants receiving a number as they entered the classroom that represented their chance to select a spiritual gift from table. The participants were instructed to hold on to their gifts until later on in the session. It opened with prayer and the reading of the reading of Ephesians 4:11-12, which list spiritual gifts for “equipping saints and edifying the body of Christ.”

The youth were anxious to view the results of their test, which was scored by the writer. The scored CYSGT, ranking sheets, and gift descriptions were returned to the participants with an explanation of the scoring system. The highest score in each category is twenty-four and the lowest possible is zero. The researcher informed the students that the three highest scores represented their spiritual gifts. She further explained that some had duplicate high scores. In the event of double scores, the participants were advised to select the score that best represented their talent. They were also instructed to check the scores for accuracy.

The test revealed that five participant’s spiritual gifts were for pastor; two of those scores were above twenty. One student’s primary gifts were help, service, and ministry. Teaching and evangelism was indicated as being the primary spiritual gift for four students. Dr. Price reminded the students that spiritual gifts could change how they grow and develop spiritually.

Time was allotted for the youth to become familiar with the results of their spiritual gifts as determined by the CYSGT. The classroom resonated with comments, expressions of joy, astonishment, and questions. In the midst of the excitement, in some

cases bewilderment, instructions were given by the researcher for the participants to select a gift from the table. Permission was granted for them to exchange or attempt to steal a fellow participant's gift.

Collectively, the participants decided to keep the gift they individually selected. Generally, participants chose spiritual gifts based on the appearance of the gift-wrap. Dr. Cheryl Price, the writer's professional associate for the ministry project, commented that, "During the game, adults usually attempt to exchange or steal spiritual gifts, not youth." This is significant for the study because some religious leaders, scholars, and parents believe that youth are not spiritually or socially mature enough to accept a call into vocational ministry.

Besides, questioning God's authority regarding the matter, the inability of some church leaders and congregants, can stiffen and preclude youth from walking in their calling. The writer was elated to see Christ-like behavior in the youth. The posture and behavior of this group suggests a mature spirit of honoring one another's gifts and respectfully accepting what was chosen, if you will, denotes the working of the Holy Spirit within them.

After everyone secured a gift, they were instructed to compare the wrapped gifts was with their CYSGT scores revealed. To their dismay, there were few matches between the two activities. The lesson discussion attempted to explain how, through the work of the Holy Spirit, God provides every church, called in Jesus' name, individuals with spiritual gifts needed to fulfill scripture. Spiritual gifts are given for the edification of the

Body of Christ, the church. The youth were also reminded that oftentimes churches are not fruitful because some members refuse to accept and honor the gifts of their fellow congregants.

Discovering their spiritual gifts was particularly rewarding for a male student who is autistic. His mother was nurturing, protective and feared her son would not understand the program. To her chagrin, the participant was an intricate member of the ministry project. Several conversations regarding his performance in the sessions enhanced her ability to visualize her son's service to the kingdom. The youth's outward praise and worship during youth, prayer service, and the enthusiasm he exhibited when offered the chance to read scripture without shame before others convinced her to allow God to work in her son's life.

The writer reminded the mother that he takes an active role in prayer service each week. His participation is appropriate and welcome by his fellow congregants. A leader of the church prayed for a platform for him to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. The modified spiritual gifts test indicated that he possessed the gift of exhortation. His mother, who attended every session, was encouraging. There where some in society may believe he did not understand the Word, this young participant God consistently witnessed to God's ability to see, create, fill, and assign at will. New Faith received the youth's ability to share his gift with the body with open arms. In session, he actively participated by reading the Bible, textbook and praying.

He demonstrated his willingness to share his gift of exhortation with New Faith when he took the microphone and openly prayed during Tuesday night prayer after the

end of the ministry project. His mother exhibited enthusiasm as he shared his spiritual gift in the sanctuary filled with believers. When the writer asked participants questions pertaining to the lesson, he responded, “The preacher man preaches about Jesus.”

One of the twelve-year-old girls spiritual gifts test revealed a score of twenty-four for pastor and faith. A score of twenty-two for teaching and twenty-one for mercy enhanced her discernment for vocational ministry. The spiritual gifts test results did not surprise the participant or her family. She stated in her journal that, “I was not surprised by my gift. People had been telling me about it for a while.” She was the youngest girl to participate in the program, having celebrated her birthday a week before the ministry project began. She consistently delivered a message of encouragement her peers during Sunday youth service. Her mother and grandmother were elated and supportive of her choice to participate in the program. The participant’s mother stated during the closing session that she was appreciative that her daughter participated in the ministry project.

The oldest participant acknowledged that he had been struggling for years with his call into vocational ministry. He and the writer had many discussions prior to the implementation of the ministry project regarding his inability to submit totally to God’s call. The CYSGT revealed that a score of twenty-three for administration, evangelism, mercy, and teaching. The scores for the gifts of exhortation and pastor were twenty-one. The participant recorded on his answer sheet, “I need a spiritual/mental counselor to discern these thoughts.” After conversations with the participant, he admitted church leadership advised him, having suggested that he enroll in school to prepare for college. The male high school senior was the most ecstatic about identifying his spiritual gifts. He scored nineteen for teaching, eighteen for exhortation, twenty-two for discernment, and

twenty-three for mercy. His enthusiastic regarding reading the Bible every day is evidenced his knowledge of the Bible. His inquisitive nature and regular attendance at Tuesday night prayer service contributed to his obvious call to vocational ministry. Most importantly, the participant displays exuberant passion for sharing the Word with his peers. His concern was that his parents preferred he pursue a career in medicine to secure his financial stability in life. Students completed their journal entries regarding the session's focus.

The third session focused on biblical youth called by God to serve in the Kingdom. The writer introduced a brief discussion explaining how God called the sun, moon, and stars to denote time as a communication system between God and the priest in the Old Testament to indicate a specific time for festivals, rituals, and first fruit offerings. The most important ritual was the Day of Atonement, which occurred annually on the tenth day of the seventh month of the year.

Next, the participants viewed an excerpt from "Wonders of God's Creation,"¹¹ a video developed and produced by the Moody Institute of Science. The video served to depict the creative power of God in all creation. Theologically, it exhibited God's paradigm of creating seeds that spring forth to give new life in a dying situation. The scene begins with a forest fire that destroys everything except the jack pine cone. The narrator states that it is impossible for humans to penetrate the cone with a saw.

Discussed in Chapter Four, the cone protects the seeds until they spring forth after the intense heat of a forest fire that consumes dead and decaying vegetation. Students

¹¹ The Wonders of God's Creation: Planet Earth. vol. 2 *Sanctuary of Life* DVD (Chicago Moody Institute of Science, 2005).

were told that God's calls are not isolated acts or events. Like the pine seeds, youth are often called to usher in new life into society for kingdom building.

A participant read Jeremiah 1:4-8 from the textbook, *Call Waiting: God's Invitation to Youth*. The writer realized quickly that most of the participants had not thought much about youthful Jeremiah's call into vocational ministry between seventeen and twenty years old when God called him. The writer reminded that in Jeremiah 1:6, the young servant said *I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy*.

The participants read *The Call of Jeremiah, 1:4-8*, pages 19-20, in *Call Waiting, God's Invitation to Youth*. The writer led a discussion comparing Jeremiah and Moses' responses to God after they were given, not asked, their assignments. God said to Moses, *I will send thee unto Pharaoh* (Exodus 3:1-12) and to *Jeremiah, I made you a prophet to the nations*. (Jeremiah 1:5). The writer shared that Moses' charge was to bring the Israelites out of bondage and to be a light unto the world for God's redemption plan.

Young Jeremiah's call story highlighted the teaching moment emphasizing his youth and massive responsibility of calling the nation to repentance or experience God's wrath. The short lecture lead to a discussion centered on God's paradigm of issuing adult-sized assignments to teenagers and young adults in contemporary societies. Students completed their journal entries reflecting the session's lesson at the end of the session.

Session four focused on contemporary youth called into ministry. After prayer, the participants received a handout introducing the story of Rev. Charles Jenkins, pastor of the renowned Fellowship Baptist Church in Chicago. They read the story "Charles Jenkins: Ministry and the Arts", which disclosed that at age fifteen he planned

to audition as a dancer for a tour with former rapper MC Hammer.¹² He did not follow through because he heard the voice of Jesus says to him, “If you [join the tour], you'll go on stage for you. But I want you to go on a stage for me.”¹³

According to Rev. Jenkins, this was a discerning call from God. His call became clear one night when, as he says:

I was reading my Bible, I went to go to bed, closed my Bible, and something said to open it back it up. I put it on the dresser, turned the lights off, turned the fan on—and as I got all settled in, the fan is blowing the pages of the Bible—sh, sh, sh, sh, sh. Something told me to turn the light on and looked at the Bible, and the page it landed on was Isaiah 1.¹⁴

A student read the scripture and the participants commented on what Rev. Jenkins found in the Bible that lead him to acknowledge his call to vocational ministry. The participants read how his predecessor and mentor, Rev. Clay Evans his contributed to the Civil Rights Movement by supporting Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King when many pastors in Chicago kept their distance. The students also learned that Rev. Evans is also known for his contribution to African American gospel music. A devoted pastor and servant of God, Rev. Evans prepared his successor for vocational ministry, which provided a

¹² Louis R. Carlozo, “Charles Jenkins: Ministry and the Arts,” in *Outreach Magazine* (May/June 2012).

¹³ Tim Monzingo, “Teen Chosen to Lead 190-Member Beaumont Church,” in *Beaumont Enterprise*, August 8, 2013, Accessed September 5, 2013, <http://www.beaumontenterprise.com/news/article/Teen-chosen-to-lead-190-member-Beaumont-church-4717081.php>.

¹⁴ “Interviews - Pastor Charles Jenkins,” *The Gospel Truth*, Accessed September 2013, <http://www.dagospeltruth.com/pastor-charles-jenkins>.

foundation for continuation for coming generations. Rev. Jenkins became the pastor of Fellowship at age thirty-four.¹⁵

The participants were enthusiastic about hearing Rev. Jenkins' testimony. They did not know his call story, but collectively enjoyed his song, "Awesome." After learning of Rev. Jenkins' call to pastor, one participant, who is active in the music ministries, commented, "I have learned that being called to ministry at a young age doesn't mean I won't be any less affective. I can use the gifts God has given and blessed me with."¹⁶

Next, the participants reviewed the handout about Rev. Joshua Daniels of Rising Sun Baptist church in Beaumont, Texas. The church selected the teenaged pastor mentored by Dr. John Adolph in spite of his lack qualifications outlined by the church leadership. Rev. Daniels also received training by participating in the National Festival of Preaching in Louisville, Kentucky. The participants responded to Rev. Daniel's statement "I believe I'm spiritually mature enough to handle it...I wonder if I'm emotionally mature enough."¹⁷ They felt that it was a difficult job to lead people and a huge responsibility for a teenager to accept. Other comments included that "God would guide Rev. Daniels with guidance of the Holy Spirit and help of his mentor." The fact that he was in college helps him to mature and learn more about leadership."

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Tim Monzingo, "Teen Chosen to Lead 190-Member Beaumont Church," in *Beaumont Enterprise*, August 8, 2013, Accessed September 5, 2014, <http://www.beaumontenterprise.com/news/article/Teen-chosen-to-lead-190-member-Beaumont-church-4717081.php>.

Rev. Daniel's concern about his being "emotionally mature enough to lead," prompted a student to write in his journal, that "[Rev. Daniels] feels like he is spiritually mature because he knows God granted him the strength to handle leading...he does not know how the people are going to react to a nineteen year old preacher." [Sic] The participants, in their discussions, understood the tensions that could occur between the older adults and the young leader called to shepherd Christ's church.

The writer gave the participants a copy of a newspaper article about Rev. Dr. Tracey Malone, superintendent of the Chicago Southern District of the Northern Illinois Conference. She states, "Even as a child I always played the preacher...I always had those kinds of things in me but did not know what all of that was about." The significant and encouraging statement assisted the youth in of acknowledging and accepting their gifts revealed on the CYSGT.

The handout "Key to Understanding God's Call" provided the participants a comprehensive list of elements associated to listening for the Creator's voice. When questioned about what they learned from the session, comments included, "God calls the young people into ministry because they are young and fresh."

Participants invited their families to attend the last session and participant in the fellowship meal. Rev. Sellars Vine, the father of three of the participants shared his call story and spoke about biblical youth called into vocational ministry. Dr. Cheryl Price shared that she knew when she was three years old that she was anointed. She also shared that she did not accept her call until she was in divinity school.

Prior to the celebratory fellowship meal, the writer shared that the meals were reflective of the humbleness of Jesus found in John 21. He maintained His leadership

style by reminding the disciples to *cast their nets on the right side of the boat* (John 21:6). He forgave and mentored Peter in John 20-23. Jesus, as the Risen King did not find it beneath Himself to prepare a meal for His students. The students were reminded that a call into ministry is a call into service.

The family of the youngest participant attended the celebratory session. The mother expressed that her daughter excitedly shared each lesson with the family. She indicated that the program helped the twelve year old to express her call to vocational ministry. The grandmother expressed gratitude to the writer for allowing her granddaughter to participate in the ministry project. She voiced that she believed the program should continue. The mother and grandmother granted their full support to their heir's career choice.

The siblings' parents also shared that the lessons were a topic of discussion in their household. Their spiritual gifts and God's authority in calling teenagers and young adults provided another opportunity for the youth to share their future career goals.

Participant Four was extremely excited about having participated in the program. He voiced that he knew vocational ministry was his calling and now have a better understanding of the direction God plan for him. The participants received certificates for participation in the program, their individual folders containing copies of their spiritual gifts results with the explanations of each gift and a copy of the "Call Waiting: An Invitation to Youth" as a special gift.

Pre and Post Test Questions and Analysis

1. All Christians receive a call from God on their life.

This test suggests that some participants possessed prior knowledge of God's call in the life of every Christian. The combined scores revealed significant growth in the participants' knowledge of God's purpose and calling for all Christians. A student recorded in her journal, "I learned that no matter how young, or old you are, God will always call you for a purpose." Another participant wrote, "The most significant thing I have learned is that all Christians receive a call for their life." Another wrote, "God calls, partners with children and teenagers who are following Him to evangelize to people know God, to save more people [sic]."

2. I understand the local church's role in discerning members' spiritual gifts.

The combined scores suggest that there was significant increase in understanding the church's role in discerning members' spiritual gifts. One student's journal entry included that he felt "the church doesn't always necessarily follow Biblical teaching about discerning members' spiritual gifts." A number of youth indicated that their gifts are recognized and used within the church regularly.

3. God calls people into vocational ministry through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The pre-test results indicated that the participants possessed prior knowledge of the Holy Spirit's role in their call into vocational ministry. The combined test scores indicates significant gain in knowledge regarding the Holy Spirit's role in guiding individuals into vocational ministry.

4. I can identify Biblical and contemporary youth called into vocational ministry by God.

The combined results of this question indicate that the participants had possessed a small amount of knowledge of Biblical and contemporary youth called into vocational ministry by God before the project. The post-test scores revealed significant attainment of knowledge regarding Biblical and contemporary youth called into vocational ministry. The test also reflects participants' new knowledge of what vocational ministry means.

The test revealed during the instructional process that participants knew of Biblical youth but did not realize that these Biblical youth were given such a large assignment. The instruction and stories from the textbook related to Jeremiah and Timothy's call inspired one participant to write, "God called them because they are new and haven't been corrupted by the world yet." Another student writes, "The most significant information learned were the Bible stories and how young people in the Bible did great things." A journal entry regarding Pastor Joshua Daniels included, "He knows that God granted him strength to handle leading."

5. Teenagers are called to serve in vocational ministry.

The pre-test suggests that participants already believed that teenagers are called to serve in vocational ministry. The combined scores suggest a significant gain in knowledge regarding a call to serve in vocational ministry. The scores show a significant acquisition of knowledge of vocational ministry as a career choice for teenagers. A participant recorded her thoughts regarding God's call of youth into vocational ministry because, "We speak what's on our minds to do what God tells us to do without thinking about an easier way to do it."

6. I have had thoughts about a career in vocational ministry.

The administration of the spiritual gifts test and classroom instruction was the catalyst that stimulated participants' thoughts regarding a career in vocational ministry. They obtained the understanding that vocational ministry is a viable option as a career choice. The revelation of the gift for pastoral ministry inspired participants to entertain thoughts regarding vocational ministry. Two youth penned in their journals that they did not know they would have had high scores for "pastor." The writer contends that the participants considered their involvement in youth ministries activities as part of the culture of the church rather than a precursor to God's call to ministry. Some participants' hesitancy to acknowledge their thoughts about vocational ministry is significant to this ministry study. They were concerned that family and friends would not accept or discern their possible call into ministry.

7. I know and understand my spiritual the gifts.

The pre-test question suggests the participants possessed some knowledge, and understanding of their spiritual gifts. The combined scores indicate a significant growth in the participants' awareness and understanding of their respective spiritual gifts. The spiritual gifts test significantly increased participants' awareness of their gifts. One journal entry included, "I can identify my more dominate [sic] spiritual gifts at this moment of my life. I wasn't expecting so many."

The gain acquired also reflected in the journal statements affirmed participants preconceived thoughts about their spiritual gifts did not represent the magnitude of spiritual gifting they possessed. A participant recorded, "I was not surprised by my spiritual gifts." Another student stated, "People have been telling me about it for years."

Journal entries included, “I learned my gifts are what I wanted. The survey reassured me that theology is the major [focus] that I wish to live with.” A participant penned that he “felt relieved” when he learned that one of his gifts included “giving.”

8. Biblically, only human beings served in the redemptive plan of salvation for humanity.

The participants indicated a lack of understanding of the question. This deduction is founded on classroom discussions and participant journal entries. A participant writes, “I learned information on how God used young people in the Bible to do great things.” Referencing God’s call to youth, a participant noted, “God calls them because they are new and haven’t been corrupted by the world yet.” The students indicated youth learn from adult behaviors and resistance to follow God’s command and sometimes adults are so busy that they cannot see things correctly.

9. I am not concerned about how my parents and friends may view my call into vocational ministry.

The combined test scores indicate that after instruction, a significant number of participants exhibited a lack of concern regarding how family and friends may view their call into vocational ministry. The writer’s instruction enhanced the youth’s understanding of God’s sovereign authority when calling youth. “It is God who created you and calls you. If you still feel doubtful about being special and having a calling though, you are in good company.” A parent was enlightened to God’s theology and Divine Authority when calling youth into ministry.

10. God called the sun, moon, and, stars to serve in the plan of salvation to save humanity from the penalty of sin.

The pre-test scores suggest participants' knowledge of God's heavenly bodies to serve in the plan of salvation for humanity from the penalty of sin. The combined scores reveal that participants ascertained a significant increase in knowledge the role sun, moon, and stars service in God's plan to save humanity from the penalty of sin. The instruction on God's authority in calling things into being impacted participants' awareness of the aforementioned in the plan of salvation for humanity for the remission of sin.

Summary

The primary goal for this ministry project was to provide an opportunity for New Faith Baptist International Church to offer a nurturing and safe environment for teenagers and young adults discerning a call into vocational ministry to assure the continuum of Christ's church. Working together, the participants discovered their individual spiritual gifts and obtained a clearer understanding of the theology of God's call. Some felt empowered to become more active in the life of the church, while others expressed confusion regarding their spiritual gifts test. The issue, they did not know the depth of God's call for their life today.

The youths' solicitation for spiritual guidance as they struggled with their anointing allowed the writer to see and understand why God's paradigm of calling youth into vocation ministry will never cease. Youth called into vocational ministry are instrumental in enlightening their unsaved peers to God's pathos for humanity, which is evidenced by Christ's sacrificial gift of salvation.

Youth participating in the ministry serve to justify the need for a ministry program for youth called to lead Christ's church. Their love for God and desire to serve supersede that of many adult church leaders worldwide. The commitments and sacrifices given to assist in the program's success is a testament to the awesome work they will accomplish for the kingdom.

Biblical accounts of youth indicate that God calls individuals from every stage of life to serve in kingdom building. Scriptural accounts of God's paradigm of calling youth

does not record the Creator requesting parent's permission to call their children to serve in vocational ministry. Biblical youth received their calls and assignments from the Creator or with the assistance of others as demonstrated by the laying of hands on Timothy. God sanctified and ordained Jeremiah before his physical being in the womb and birth into the world. The Jesus, sent as an infant, born of a young virgin, grow into becoming the liberating Lord, and Savior for anyone that would believe in Him.

Scriptural accounts of individuals call into vocational ministry, both young and old, reveal that God commands, never asked. Samuel and Jeremiah's assignments superseded older servants' mission calls. God often calls teenagers and young adults to end the old and usher in new seasons according to God's plan for humanity salvation.

Historically, youth have continuously received calls from God into vocational ministry. The Church must provide a nurturing and safe environment to accommodate the guidance and spiritual formation required for youth called into vocational ministry. The historic youth's assignments served as pivotal actions and events that advanced the kingdom, Katie Cannon, for example. God decided to implement a pilot vocational ministry program for youth at New Faith that met with success, as a student currently studies at Moody Bible institute for kingdom building. Another participant, graduated to the adult praise and worship team in preparation for perhaps a future call to church leadership.

Contemporary youth's call stories, such a Rev. Charles Jenkins, reflect that God's paradigm of speaking directly to youth did not conclude with Biblical youth. It also reflects the role of the church in discerning teenagers and young adults' call into vocational ministry. This program is adaptable and applicable to any church context.

Individual spiritual gifts test score confirmed, enlightened, and provided a personal nuance for the participants of the ministry project. They desired to learn something about their relationship with and service to God. The spiritual gifts test divulged additional attributes and the charged to share them with the Body of Christ as they grow into leaders of the church. The confirmation for those who had prior knowledge of the call reflects the church's effort to raise the level of youth ministry focus for all spiritual levels of youth within the church. Three youth recognized their call to vocational ministry prior to their participation in the project. The spiritual gifts test revealed an additional three exhibiting high scores for church leadership in the ministries of pasturing, evangelism and teaching.

The pushback described in the historical foundation surfaced during the implementation process. One student's determination to pursue an undergraduate degree in religious studies prompted the writer to explain to his father that it is imperative for parents to understand that God's call to youth is as sovereign as the calls of adults. On January 13, 2013, one month after the completion of the youth ministry project, the participant forwarded his application for religious studies to the Moody Bible Institute. He submitted his application in the presence of his father and the writer with much joy and enthusiasm. Both parent and child have submitted to God's will and divine authority.

Attendance issues, due to secular commitments, precluded regular attendance for some participants. This phenomenon is a research resources issue revealed in the historical foundations chapter. The arduous task of guiding youth whose youth are anointed and gifted for vocational ministry must become a mission for the church. It must start discerning youth's call at early much like young musicians or athletes.

The writer has made a commitment to work with the director of children's ministries to enhance the training of the "Timothy's" group through activities that would encourage their consideration for a career in vocational ministry. It is God's compassionate sovereign call for the salvation of humanity.

The blessing from the writers' pastor, Rev. Dr. Felder, and co-pastor, Rev. Dr. Alexis Felder, underpinned the work that moved this project forward. The support of the pastor of pastoral care, which has oversight of youth ministries and its members, prevented barriers from precluding the success of the project.

Extending the ministry project to allow students present a mini sermon, teach a mini lesson or make presentations on evangelizing would enhance the youth's learning experience while providing an opportunity to minister to each other.

Conclusion

This ministry project afforded the writer opportunity to witness and experience the impact of a ministry for youth discerning God's call to service in kingdom building. The participants' enthusiasm and dedication to God's service in spite of pushbacks, setbacks, and fears attest to God's compassion for humanity by calling and equipping youth for vocational ministry and matched compassion for humanity. Most importantly, it is a testament to God's plan through the gift of Jesus Christ for the continuum of the Church for the generations to He returns for the Body.

The writer is encouraged by the participants' praxis of serving and preparing for a long life with God. She is most appreciative of the support received from her New Faith family and participants for allowing the project to come to fruition. The support is second

only to God's favor by calling her to implement this ministry project for continuum of Christ's church for kingdom building. *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believe in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*

APPENDIX A

APPLICATION

Sermon on the Mount: (SOM) Teenagers and Young Adults Discerning God's Call Into Vocational Ministry

Sermon on the Mount: Teenagers and Young Adults Discerning God's Call into Vocational Ministry (SOM) will assist youth explore and understand their call to vocational ministry. Through the six-week program participants will: examine God's call of Biblical and contemporary youth to serve in the redemption plan of salvation for humanity; the theology of God's call; the roles of the Holy Spirit and church for discerning calls; and discover individual spiritual gifts.

Participation Form

Name: _____ School: _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____

Parent(s) Name (s): _____

Address/City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Telephone Number: _____ Cell: _____

Email Address: _____

Baptism Date: _____ Date of completion for Members Orientation Classes: _____

Church Ministry Involvement: (Choir, Usher Board, NYC, etc. _____

Parental Consent Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Student: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX B**COVENANT AGREEMENT****COVENANT CONSENT FORM FOR THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT:
TEENAGERS AND YOUNG ADULTS DISCERNING GOD'S CALL
INTO VOCATIONAL MINISTRY PROGRAM**

I _____, hereby consent to be in covenant as a participant in the Sermon on the Mount: Teenagers and Young Adults Discerning God's Call Into Vocational Ministry Program, at New Faith Baptist Church International. I will participate in class sessions with an open heart allowing God speak to me through the Holy Spirit about sharing my spiritual gifts with the body of Christ, His church. I understand that this project is for the completion of Minister Brenda Robinson's doctoral requirement through United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio.

Student _____

Parent _____

APPENDIX C
PRE-TEST / POST-TEST

Sermon on the Mount: Teenagers and Young Adults Discerning God's Call into Vocational Ministry

Test

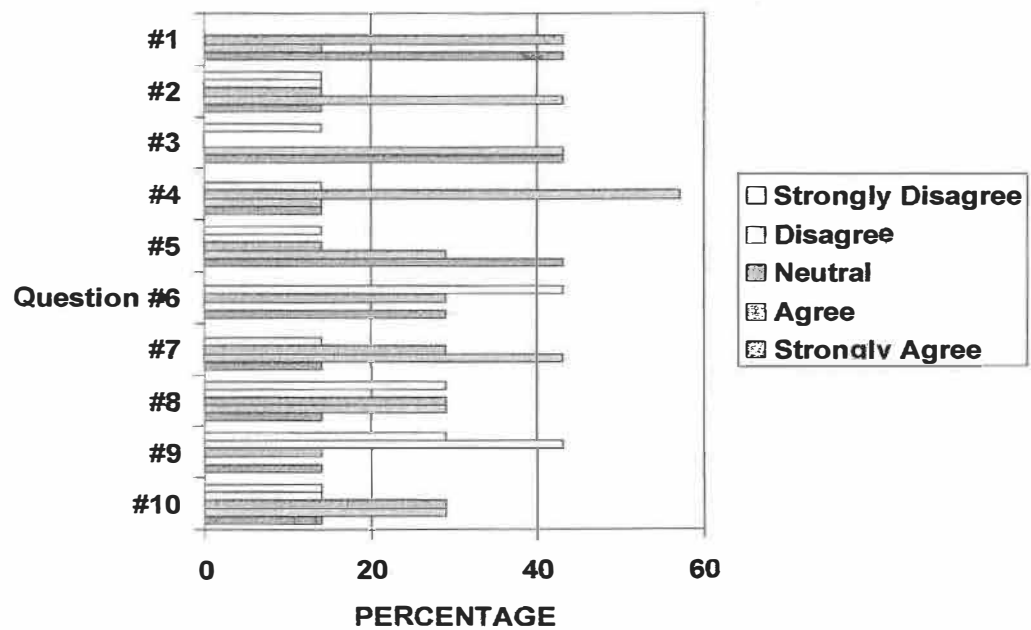
On a scale of one to five, rate your knowledge or understanding of the statements listed below.

(1.) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. All Christians receive a call from God for their life. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. I understand the local church's role in discerning people spiritual gifts. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. People are lead into vocational and ministry by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. I can identify Biblical youth called into ministry by God. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Teenagers can serve in vocational ministry. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. I have had thoughts about a career in vocational ministry. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. I know and understand my Spiritual gifts | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Biblically, only human beings served in the redemptive plan of salvation for humanity. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. I am concerned about how my parents and friends might view my call in to Christian ministry. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. God called the sun, moon, and stars to serve in the plan to save humanity from the penalty of sin. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

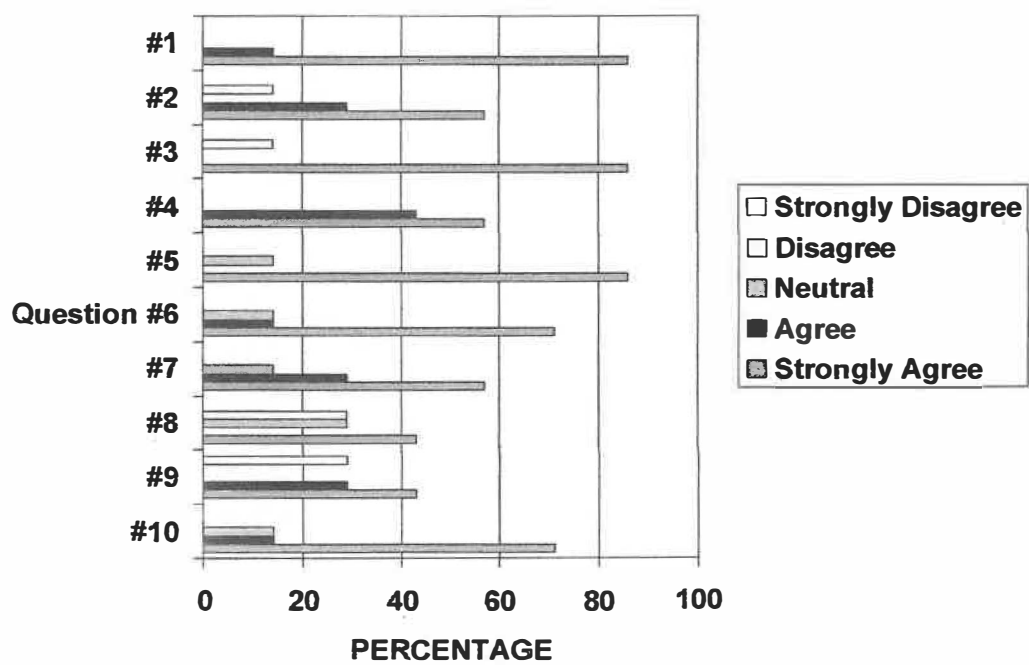
APPENDIX D

HOW PARTICIPANTS RESPONDED ON THE PRETEST



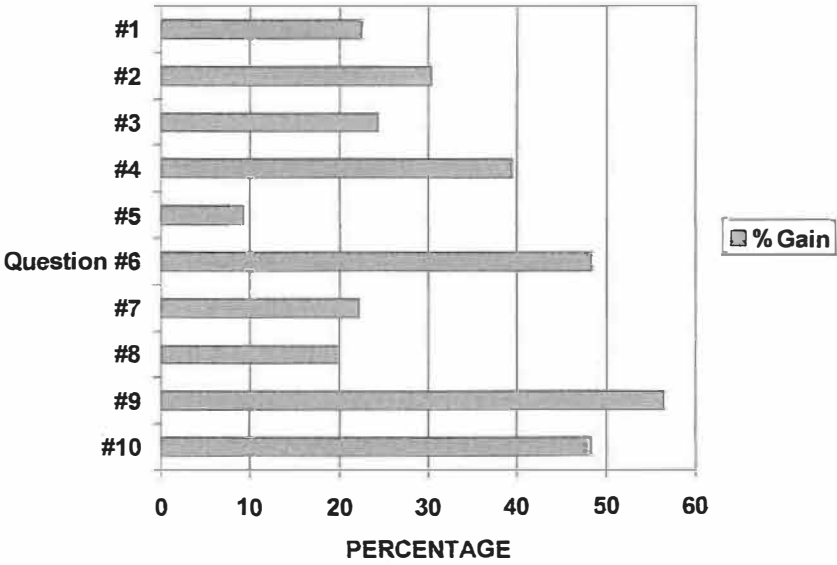
APPENDIX E

HOW PARTICIPANTS RESPONDED ON THE POSTTEST



APPENDIX F

POSTTEST GAINS



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